Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

Judith Hunt — Women and Liberation

Julian Tudor Hart — Toward a Marxist view of Primary Medical Care in Britain

Monty Johnstone — Trotsky and the Popular Front Part II

Professor Robert Browning — Byzantine Feudalism

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 19, Number 11

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Editorial Comments

THE crisis gripping the capitalist world, and the "cure" being attempted by capitalist governments re-emphasise the old, bitter lesson—no gains made under capitalism are either safe or permanent.

Politicians, who only a short time ago were pledging their fidelity to full employment and rising living standards are now proclaiming that, for an indeterminate period ahead, the steady worsening of living standards' which has already begun, must continue. Indeed, the governments of the USA, West Germany, France and especially Great Britain, have already begun legislating huge cuts in the social services and variants of wage restraint policy.

In Britain, the latest form of this latter is the "Social Contract" and the £6 maximum wage increase.

A gigantic campaign is under way to sell the ideas that there is no alternative to the cuts and to wage restraint; that the choice is either "sacrifices now" or continued inflation and/or massive unemployment. In the event the ordinary people have got all three.

The latest Communist Party pamphlet on the crisis by George Matthews[1] is a most valuable and essential aid in the fight against this campaign.

It deals in great detail with the nature of the present crisis as a crisis of *capitalism* (not "world crisis" for the socialist countries must be included out) and the specific reasons for the particularly acute crisis of British capitalism.

It provides detailed and authoritative data proving that big sections of workers will be only a few pence better off, even if granted the £6 maximum, while most low-paid workers will be worse off. For not only will inflation erode the real value of the £6 but they will come into the tax-paying category and, as a consequence, lose a number of important benefits. All workers will find that the gap between increases in wages and increases in prices will grow greater given the present rate of inflation.

Particularly effective is the pamphlet's refutation of the argument that workers and their trade unions are responsible for inflation. Fact after fact is adduced proving that the responsibility lies with the succession of right-wing Labour and Tory governments since World War II and with the big monopolies and multinationals.

Finally, the alternative policy of the Communist Party, similar in many respects to that of the *Tribune* group and of other sections of the Left, is outlined and developed.

Its basis is the class approach, the only real and effective one, namely "to tackle the crisis at the expense of the rich and the big monopolies rather than at the expense of the people".

It emphasises the need to increase wages and pensions, to end the cuts and freeze prices in order to stimulate demand and reduce unemployment. It calls for a cut in arms expenditure, for the stringent limitation of the export of capital in order to increase investment in home industry. It proposes the requisitioning of the foreign shareholdings of British firms in order to help pay off Britain's debts to foreign bankers, the nationalisation of the main British and multinational firms and the expansion of trade with the socialist and Third World countries.

The united struggle for these and for the many other demands contained in the Communist Party alternative policy will, the pamphlet emphasises, bring nearer the victory of socialism in Britain.

WEEK OF MARXIST DISCUSSION

Professor Brian Simon, Chairman of the National Cultural Committee of the Communist Party, has sent us the following brief report of the Committee's "Week of Marxist Discussion":

The *Week of Marxist Discussion*, which took place on September 8 to 14 at the Central London Polytechnic, focused attention on a number of important ideological issues, both political and cultural. The very full discussions which followed each presentation reflected a widespread interest in the Marxist standpoint, and a genuine desire to reach clarification on these issues. Instead of

[1] *Britain's Crisis, Cause and Cure*, Communist Party, 15p.

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giving a catalogue of events, it may be best to focus briefly on some of these issues here.

In his acute analysis of the role of the state, instead of repeating well-known Marxist theses, Jack Woddis raised a number of specific problems, among them the question of the relation between the coercive role of the state and that of ensuring voluntary consent to existing social relations, that of the state machine as a weapon of oppression, and that of the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state in the transition to socialism. In general Woddis questioned the mechanistic application of Marxist theses, for instance, in relation to the armed forces, in the light of contemporary developments in a number of countries (e.g. Italy, Portugal), and stressed that development in particular circumstances is fundamentally a social-political question. As for the need to smash the state in the transition to socialism, Lenin himself recognised that there were areas where this formula does not literally apply, and Woddis gave the example of education (a function of the state) which required transformation rather than smashing; a high proportion of the personnel of the existing state apparatus in Britain, he pointed out, are already organised in trade unions and can be won for socialism. These and other points —for instance, on the role of the law and the legal system—were taken up in a thorough discussion of the issues involved.

Other political issues discussed included "Reformism and the British Labour Movement" and "Industrial Relations". The former discussion, led by Vic Allen (Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Leeds), revolved around the meaning of reformism and its social and ideological basis. Basic to the reformist approach is the belief that society is fundamentally unchanging and unchangeable, a concept expressed by Max Weber, and influential among academics. Vic Allen showed that the TUC decision on wage restraint is essentially reformist since it directs attention to wages as the source of the present capitalist crisis and in no way attacks its real causation. On the other hand, he argued, circumstances are now altering the consciousness of the mass of the people, the entry of the government into wage settlements on a large scale having the effect of leading people to see the government as the main adversary, resulting in widespread questioning of the dominant ideology and normally accepted political processes. Since 1968 a quite new development has expressed itself in the refusal of militant sections of the working class to bow to government direction; for instance, in the forms taken by the resistance to the Industrial Relations Act and to Heath's challenge to the miners in 1974. These events indicate that reformist ideology is losing its hold over people's minds.

PROBLEMS OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

The high point of the discussion on cultural issues was the marathon session on the Saturday afternoon and evening on the film and theatre. This included a showing of the very striking Cinema Action film—*The Miners' Film*—as well as of the impressive Bolivian film *Blood of the Condors*, based on Bolivian Indians' experience of and reaction to the surreptitious sterilisation of Indian women by an American Peace Corps team. After a struggle, this film has been shown all over Bolivia with striking effect.

The session included a contribution by David Bradshaw of the Belt and Braces drama group. Among the audience were representatives of other drama groups (for instance, Red Ladder), and the issues raised here were concerned with such topics as how best such groups should set about entertaining working-class audiences; what sort of dramatic productions should be undertaken, what is the best venue for such performances (theatres, working men's clubs, halls, factories, etc.), the advantages and disadvantages of each, and so on. Representatives from Cinema Action described how their films were made (no script, no commentary) and the concept behind their approach.

Discussion also centred round the question of form and its relation to content. It was clear that this opportunity for an exchange of views and experience among those seeking to use drama and film to heighten revolutionary consciousness was greatly appreciated, and that more such opportunities must be provided in the future. During the week the fine film of the Shrewsbury pickets, made by a group of students and staff at the newly established National Film School, was also shown.

Another session arousing particular interest turned on a debate between John Saville, Professor of Economic History at Hull, and John Foster, author of *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (1974), about the mode of approach and findings of this study, which has attracted much attention.

Three themes were selected and taken in

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turn relating to the discussion in Foster's study—the origins of capitalism, in particular in relation to the question of primitive accumulation; the nature and problems of the Lancashire textile industry in the early nineteenth century; and the development of radical ideology or class consciousness. There were questions and discussion from the floor on each point. It was the final one that aroused most interest and comment, notably on the problem of defining or differentiating levels of consciousness. But a concluding comment by Eric Hobsbawm emphasised that the details of the argument were not the vital point. What made Foster's study a landmark was the way new questions were posed and new means of answering them sought. For instance, here was a first attempt to analyse the nature of a local capitalist class.

In a well-attended session on "Literature and Revolution" Jeremy Hawthorne developed the theme that, through enabling people to understand the reality beneath appearances, literature contributes to the revolutionary process; Jack Lindsay discussed some of the problems facing Marxist writers (particularly the danger of oversimplifying the class struggle and finding it expressed in every aspect of life), while David Craig was concerned specifically to illustrate the different means by which the revolutionary artist sets out to heighten socialist consciousness within the constraints of a class society; his examples were drawn from film, revolutionary songs, as well as from literature generally.

Theoretical issues of considerable importance were raised in the discussion on education—particularly concerning the Marxist approach to the content of education in contemporary society; in the very interesting session on "The Nature of Women's Domestic Labour", and in other discussions on a variety of topics over the week as a whole.

While, as is to be expected, there were certain criticisms of the methods of presentation of some of the topics discussed, there is no doubt that the week served a very valuable purpose, and that consideration should be given to making it an annual event. The week was concluded with a general session on the relation of socialist consciousness to economic and political struggle, led by James Klugmann (editor of *Marxism Today*) and Gordon McLennan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

FRIEDRICH LESSNER—"COMMON SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION"

Books about the lives and personalities of the men who, along with Marx and Engels, brought the Communist movement into being continue to appear in the German Democratic Republic.

The latest is a small book[2]—"I took the manuscript of the 'Manifesto' to the printers"—by a German worker, a tailor called Friedrich Lessner who describes himself modestly as "a common soldier of the revolution", but who played an outstanding part in the socialist movements in both Germany and Britain for over 60 years.

His long political life (he was born in 1825 and died in 1910) spanned the whole gamut of development—political and organisational—of the international and British Socialist movement. It began with his participation in the last Chartist demonstration on April 10, 1848, which was to take the third Chartist petition to parliament and he died a few years after the "dress rehearsal", the 1905 revolution in Russia, which he greeted with the greatest enthusiasm.

He attended the foundation conferences of the Communist League in 1847 and, as he puts it, "played a modest part in the publication of [that] epoch-making document (the 'Communist Manifesto' which the League commissioned Marx and Engels to write) in that I took the manuscript to the printers and brought the proofs back to Karl Schapper for correction".

He was back in Germany in August 1848 participating in the struggle following the outbreak of the German revolution in February and March of that year. He was involved in the Cologne Communist conspiracy trial of 1851 being sentenced to three years' imprisonment in a fortress.

On his release he returned to Britain, worked at his trade and played an active part in the German Workers' Educational League, above all as propagandist, teacher and writer on Marxism and especially on "Socialism and Trade Unionism".

He was most actively associated with the foundation and work of the International Working Men's Association, the First International, serving on its General Council from the outset and attending every one of its Congresses.

He established close links with British

[2] "Ich brachte das Kommunistische Manifest zum Drucker" by Friedrich Lessner, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, G.D.R.

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socialists and trade unionists and joined the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League and the Independent Labour Party. He developed particularly close relations with Harry Quelch, Editor of *Justice*—the weekly journal of the SDF—for which he wrote many articles.

He was a close personal friend of Marx and Engels from his early days in the Communist movement and his book contains many vivid descriptions of them, their political and theoretical battles, and of their less serious moments.

Lessner's book is an invaluable commentary by a participant and close colleague on the work of Marx and Engels in the labour movement. It contains his major writings—"Before and after 1848—Memoirs of an old Communist"; "A Worker's Recollections of Marx and Engels"; his letters to Marx, Engels and others and some of his articles printed in various journals. The Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany has supplied a chronology of Lessner's life, pictures of Marx, Engels and various scenes from the political struggles during the 19th century as well as a most useful introduction and indexes.

Part of his autobiographical writing was already published in English, but has become a very scarce pamphlet. There is a strong case for the publication of a translation of this new Dietz publication which throws much light on British labour history as well as the lives of Marx and Engels.

PRISON WRITINGS

Life has a habit of moving on rather fast, leaving the gurus of yesterday looking distinctly jaded and worse for wear. Régis Debray is one such—as the paperback reprint of his book[3] makes all too clear though the publisher's blurb claims him as "one of the world's foremost Marxist theorists."

When it first appeared—the original French text was published in 1970—the first essay, one on Bolivia, seemed to indicate a growing political understanding on Régis Debray's part. The rest of the book seems to contradict any such idea.

In some slight theoretical discussions of some issues Debray characterises "a crisis" as a time when "all the legions of politicians, dialecticians and theoreticians of Marxism always find themselves completely at sea". It is in such "moments of springlike enthusiasm", he tells us, that the creation of "a powerful majority" to lay the basis for proletarian power "is not a very exciting prospect and naturally tends to get forgotten". One might ask, by whom?

Certainly it has not been forgotten by France's Communists and perhaps that is why Debray vents so much spleen on them in the book's final autobiographical essay. From a bourgeois background he attends one of France's leading colleges. With a group of other students he takes out a party card—"occasionally, there would be a division," he says of a rally, adding "it costs little to call oneself a Communist". All he seems to have wanted to do was to pick a fight with a policeman. The illusions of those who joined in rallies thinking they "were to some degree making history" appal him. No, he says, when the chips are down the individual (he only speaks of individuals) cannot rely on the enthusiasm created at such meetings. These things, he says, "are not taught to us in times of peace". Which just goes to show precisely how limited his experience is.

In another morsel: "If I wrote something today, when it is finally published it will be irrelevant. . . . I wrote some quick notes on the situation (the article on Bolivia referred to) which might have had some validity for a month or so, after which I would no longer have agreed with them myself . . . when they were finally published four months later in Cuba they were no more than a joke. I mention this unimportant incident. . . ."

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS, MOSCOW

In recent months Progress Publishers, Moscow, have published English translations of a whole number of theoretical books on a wide variety of subjects, written by Soviet specialists.

They appear in several different series, for instance, "Theoretical and Critical Studies"; "Problems of the Third World"; "Socialism Today"; "Current Problems", etc., and range from highly specialised studies in particular fields to critical commentaries on more general subjects and political developments.

A good example of the specialised studies is Irina Osadchaya's *From Keynes to Neo-Classical Synthesis*[4], which discusses the

[3] Régis Debray, *Prison Writings*, Penguin Books, 75p.

[4] From Keynes to Neo-Classical Synthesis; a Critical Analysis by Irina Osadchaya, Progress Books, Moscow. 50p. Available from Central Books, 37 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1.

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various trends in contemporary bourgeois economic growth theory, starting with Keynes, who, criticising the theory that capitalism was a *self-regulating* economic system, suggested how economic crises might be alleviated by limited state intervention and laid the foundations for macro-economic theory.

Osadchaya's book then analyses neo-Keynsian theory, its critique by the neo-classicists and then discusses the various attempts that are being made to synthesise the two different approaches. Finally it contrasts Marxist and bourgeois attitudes to the problems of economic growth.

It is a useful and informative piece of work and cheap by any standards these days for a book of over 200 pages.

SOVIET STUDIES OF BRITISH LABOUR

Readers of Russian have access to an increasing number of works on the British labour movement as the acute nature of the economic and political crisis here is studied in the Soviet Union.

Among recent volumes is one entitled *Conditions and Struggle of the British Working Class*—a collection of essays which includes contributions by authors who use to the full the availability of British statistics and commentaries.

The detailed subject-matter in the 350 pages (price £1 at the official exchange rate) covers the historical background to the deepening crisis as well as analysis of new developments, the mass struggles, studies of the Labour Party, political trends within the labour and trade union movement, the role of the Communist Party and, of great relevance, the situation in Northern Ireland.

Readers will find in S. P. Pergubov's essay "Shifts in the Labour Movement and the Labour Party (end 60s and beginning of the 70s)" a clearly-presented and thoughtful contribution. He deals with the role of the trade unions in the party, the often-underestimated part played by the Fabian Society in drawing up right-wing theory and the great political significance of the Liaison Committee between the TUC general council, national executive of the party and the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Another interesting essay, by Valentin Peschanski, looks at the changing composition of the working class, its white-collar and manual components and how the conditions of the two are approximating.

This collection will add to the general reader's understanding of the situation here.

A BOOK HE DID NOT SELL

We have just received a letter from Shohei Inoue who edits a section called "My Bookshelf" in *Akahata* (*Red Flag*), the daily paper of the Japanese Communist Party.

In an article in this section entitled "A Book left Unsold" he recounts how, when 25 years ago a number of Japanese workers were sacked from their jobs during a so-called "Red Purge" under the aegis of General MacArthur, some of them came to live with him, and he had to sell his books to find the money to support them. One of the books that *he did not sell* was A. L. Morton's *A People's History of England.*

"I appeal to teachers of the English language in Japan," he writes "if you want to know something about the people of England, you must read A. L. Morton's History." He also informs his readers of Leslie Morton's recent article in *Marxism Today* on the "Centenary of the Critique of the Gotha Programme".

TRANSLATORS

We are very grateful to those of our readers who, in answer to our appeal, volunteered to translate from various languages.

We will call on them from time to time. Incidentally we still badly need translators from Italian and Spanish.

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Women and Liberation

Judith Hunt

Since 1968 we have witnessed and been involved with the development of a women's movement which has raised new and fundamental questions concerning the nature of women's oppression and how to organise for women's liberation.

National campaigns for legal and social reform for women have had significant success. There has been a far higher level of activity in the trade union movement on the questions of equal pay and women's rights. Women's liberation groups are established in every town, and major cities have groups in each locality. Many other campaigning groups on various aspects of women's rights have also developed. This new movement is of essential interest and concern for Communists and socialists.

> "The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory."[1]

The Women's Liberation Movement[2] has challenged the role of women in society. It has also required Marxists to look more closely at the relationship between women's oppression, class struggle and strategy for revolution. The central aim of this article is to explore the development of the WLM, assess its impact on the labour movement and to explore some of the problems and questions that have been raised.

Divisions in Society

The framework within which Marxists place the struggle for women's liberation is that of class society. The fundamental division in capitalist society is between capital, those who own the means of production, and labour, those who sell their labour power for their "living". Workers, both men and women, are exploited by that contradiction and suffer from its distortions in all areas of life. The social ownership of the means of production and the building of a socialist society contains within it a solution to that contradiction.

A further important division is that of the sex division within society between men and women. This is a division which affects women of all classes, although it appears in different degrees. The depth of sex discrimination and the difficulties of eradicating its existence are still being explored. It is clear that it is a division which will not automatically disappear with the transformation of the economic base of society. Social ownership and the development of a socialist society rapidly removes the class relationship between men and men, and women and women, but it does not necessarily develop the liberation of women at the same pace. Prejudice and traditional attitudes amongst both men and women act as brakes on progress. Thus it is essential that we continue to explore in depth the existence and re-creation of women's oppression and recognise that it is an important area for research and analysis crucial both to our immediate struggle and the future development of a socialist society.

A central question is the role which ideology plays in maintaining the subordination of women. The perpetuation of the myth of female inferiority is a major contribution to the re-creation of economic and social restraint on women. There is no need to build nurseries, if women are taught that their role in life will be "mothers". There is no need to provide communal facilities for housework if it is assumed that each house will have its own "domestic slave" (Engels). Women need no longer be subject to the restraint of their biology. Modern technology, especially the widespread availability of the contraceptive pill, has provided many of the answers. The economic and material base for women's oppression *need* no longer exist in society; its continued re-creation is a measure of the strength of traditional ideas and prejudice.

Forms of Women's Oppression

Women in our society, like men, are subordinate to capital; unlike their husbands, boyfriends, male colleagues, women are also subordinate to men. The essence of the sex division in society is that women are expected to perform specific functions within the family, which, in the present society, limit their involvement in economic and social activity. Because the socially pre-ordained future for women is that of marriage

[1] Samora Machel, "Women's Liberation is Essential for the Revolution", page 37, from the *African Communist,* No. 61, 1975.

[2] The Women's Liberation Movement will be titled WLM in all future references.

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and the responsibility of rearing children, the education and training they receive is inadequate for other purposes. Thus even where women choose to work, and are fortunate enough to have some child-care facilities, they are still financially dependent upon their husbands. The pervasiveness of the assumptions concerning women is that the many women who are not in the category of "married women" are still subject to the same inequalities. Single, divorced, separated or widowed women still receive low pay, unequal education and training and are denied access to promotion and job-opportunity because of their sex.[3]

Women are oppressed within society: (i) by an *education system* which discriminates against girls being able to function in a variety of spheres; (ii) by the existence of family structure (through lack of state provision) that wives have total responsibility for the children and for the care of the male worker; (iii) by discrimination at work on the grounds of sex by their social and psychological subordination to men, both in general and to individuals.[4]

One of the significant features of the recent period has been the gradual development of organised campaigns which are publicly linking the separate areas of women's oppression. The increase in the number of married women at work in the last 15 years and the gradual changes in expectation amongst young females, the demographic change in family size created by the widespread use of the birth pill have all contributed to women experiencing more sharply the contradictions of their position in society. The lack of education and training opportunities and absence of child-care facilities severely limit women's occupational choice. Women are mainly employed in a small range of occupations within which there is a concentration into areas of "women's work". Women's average earnings work out at 54 per cent of those of men. This is a clear result of the sex division within society. The reward for child-rearing is a return to a low-paid position within an industry alongside overwhelming domestic responsibilities.

[3] Women are frequently refused employment on the grounds that "they might have children", or if they have them that the children will cause high absenteeism.

[4] A significant part of the psychological oppression is that women are regarded primarily as sex objects within our society, i.e. whether they are attractive enough "to catch a man", whether they are able to produce children, and frequently regarded as non-persons when these two functions are no longer possible.

Struggles and Campaigns

Specific campaigns developed to alter this profound inequality between men and women. The national nursery campaign established the acceptance of the idea of nursery education, necessary for children but also enabling mothers to work. The various struggles for equal pay and the impact of the pressure on the Labour Party resulted in the introduction of equal-pay legislation. The drafting of the Anti-Discrimination Act is a concrete result of campaigning and raising of the question of discrimination against women. The nation-wide establishment of refuges for "battered wives" has brought to the public's attention that the privacy of some families can disguise some appalling oppression and that society has a responsibility to solve some of these "individual" problems.

The extensive campaigning for contraception to be freely available and the safeguarding and extending of the rights to safe and legal abortions has shown the political necessity for women to have the right to choose when to have and when not to have children.

The Women's Liberation Movement

The sharpest expression of organised activity against all areas of women's oppression has come from the WLM. It is therefore necessary to outline the early development of the movement and to look at it in detail. Not because the WLM is the cause of other developments, but because it is the sharpest ideological and organisational expression of movement amongst women.

The women's movement's development coincided with a period of intensified class struggle in a whole range of areas, and a time of significant development of mass activity amongst students. The early groups of the WLM were started in London by women who had been activists in the student movement and who had been involved with the Vietnam and other campaigns of the late 60s and women who had been part of the establishment of WL groups in the United States. Provincial groups developed concurrently, many of the main activists being older women who had been educated at university and college and who were facing the unexpected frustrations of life with small children. Many women who had been involved with the traditional left became involved with local groups.

"Consciousness Raising" groups emerged as one of the main forms of the WLM groups, their aim being the exploration as groups and individuals of the role and function of women's oppression, to develop solidarity through a clearer understanding of that oppression and action on it through organising around specific demands.

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These varied enormously, some being close to "encounter" sessions, others being reading groups, others developing into action groups. Alongside local groups national and regional campaigns have developed around the four demands of the movement: 1. equal pay; 2. equal education and opportunity; 3. 24-hour nurseries (child care to be available for 24 hours); 4. free contraception and abortion on demand.[5]

The national conferences have grown from the unexpected 400 who arrived at Oxford in 1970 to regular national conferences of over 1,000 women, the most recent being held in Manchester in April 1975 with over 1,100 women and 80 children. The national conference, which is attended on a purely *ad hoc* basis, is the central point of the movement.

A regular pattern of specialist conferences has evolved, ranging from Women's Aid (battered wives' centres), Women in Socialism, to Gay Women's Conferences. A variety of local groups have been established, ranging from the IMG (International Marxist Group) dominated socialist women's groups to women's rights groups and various women's action groups and a range of WL groups. WAAC, the Women's Liberation, Abortion and Contraception Campaign, has maintained a national structure and coherent identity. The movement has produced a variety of publications reflecting the various tendencies and debates. The most widely distributed have been produced by a rotation of WL groups affiliated to *Shrew*, the London Workshop and the influential *Red Rag*, produced by a collective of Marxist feminists. There has been at various times a national newsletter, but publication to date has been sporadic.

Organisation varies from region to region. In many areas it is non-existent with separate groups existing in the same locality often failing to co-ordinate on identical campaigns. A federal type structure exists in both Manchester and London, where local groups have a political and structural relationship with a women's centre which acts as a meeting ground and a co-ordinating point. Other groups have co-ordinated at regional levels with varying degrees of success. The focal point of the whole movement has remained the national conferences.

[5] The four demands were formulated at the first national women's conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, in February-March 1970. Subsequently they were the centre of a struggle in the co-ordinating committee. That they remained and were adopted by subsequent conferences reflected a successful struggle to have a unifying national policy acceptable to most tendencies within the WLM.

The National Conferences

The national conferences have changed in structure and content since the first meeting at Oxford with the changes reflecting the political debates that have developed through the movement. The question of "Autonomy" was first raised at the conference in Skegness, 1971, and has subsequently been an item of discussion at many conferences, especially the Women in Socialism conferences.[6] It is significant that the debate arose at Skegness and the context in which it arose determined many attitudes for the future and led to one of the WLM's most distinctive features: that is, the exclusion of men from all meetings and the absence of a direct relationship with any political party or group.

The presence at Skegness of a group of Maoists including several men, who repeatedly attempted to take political leadership of the meeting, caused a great deal of hostility. Firstly, because it was done without any respect for those involved at the conference. Secondly, because the political view being expressed was contrary to the purpose and feeling of the conference, the main thrust of which was to attack the existence of an independent women's movement and to define it as being a diversion from the "real struggle".

This experience at Skegness confirmed for many women experiences in the student movement and amongst the organised left and labour movement. That is that women in the movement were expected to operate in a clearly-defined, subordinate role. The women made the tea, typed the leaflets and sold the papers. The men organised, spoke at meetings and took the decisions. In early meetings of the WLM, where men were included, they tended to dominate the discussion, not simply because of egocentric behaviour, but because of a deep experience and confidence gap between men and women engendered by society. The separation into "women only" groups and conferences was a recognition of this gap and an attempt to find ways of developing and extending the political and social confidence of women.

Question of Autonomy

The conference in Manchester in 1972 (March) reaffirmed that men were to be excluded, this time not only from the sessions but, at future conferences, from the social events.[7] This question

[6] See in particular papers from the Women's Liberation and Socialism Conference, September 1973.

[7] This was mainly because of unpleasant incidents caused by men who arrived "looking for talent".

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of political and personal relationships with men and "male-dominated" organisations is one which has remained a subject of debate. "Separatists" within the movement advocate that all activity should take place apart from men and that there is no value in alliance at any level. This is only a small, but at times vocal, group not reflective of the majority involved with WLM.[8] Other women have consistently voiced suspicion and hostility to women who are involved with the organised left. Firstly, on the grounds that it is compromising to work in male-dominated organisations; secondly, that it reflects a lack of commitment to the WLM. An acceptable working definition of autonomy has evolved where the WLM is clearly autonomous from any organisation, although welcoming into its ranks all women, regardless of their political or personal affiliations who identify with women's liberation.[9]

Men are excluded from all conferences and groups which are defined as being of the WLM. This is not incompatible with men being involved, as they are, with women's rights groups, abortion campaign groups, etc., which have a direct relationship with the WLM. Nor is it contradictory with seeking support from the labour movement on specific issues. This has been an important development in the last two years. The most important question has been the consistent attempts to maintain a broad movement which has managed to accommodate these different tendencies and, unlike the American movement, has retained a national identity acting as an umbrella for many different forces. Moves to create a narrowly defined movement with a programme that would automatically cause splits have been consistently rejected.

Wages for Housework?

The discussion concerning housework continued at the conference in Acton, London, in November 1972. The discussion was centred around Selma James' pamphlet "Women and Work", which ended with a set of proposals including a demand for "Wages for Housework". The conference broke up into work-shops to discuss the issues raised in the pamphlet. The plenary session rejected the proposals; firstly, because they provided a narrow definition of work in trade unions and offered only an oppositional approach; secondly, the majority were not in favour of a state wage for housework. Various arguments were put against this which are still relevant as it is an ongoing debate. Firstly, that payment would simply mean a maintenance of a system that causes social isolation for both mothers and children; secondly, that it is implicit that it would be the woman who would stay at home, confirming her already subordinate role; and, thirdly, that it would allow possibilities of the worst kind of manipulation of women and family size by the state.[10]

The later successful campaign carried out by many sections of the broad movement and supported by some women's liberation groups for the extension of family allowances was used by some women as a platform for a "wage" for women. There is clearly an important distinction between an allowance from the state, to clothe and feed a future worker, and a wage for housework. The former is a recognition of social responsibility for children, the latter a maintenance of an oppressive situation.[11]

Bristol and Edinburgh Conferences

The conference at Bristol in July 1973 ended with a plenary session on the Sunday, which was extended because of the sharpness of the debate on the question of sexuality and separatism. The development of the Gay Liberation Movement and the involvement of gay women in the Women's Liberation Movement was of great significance to many women who felt able to choose for the first time to relate both sexually and emotionally with other women with support and understanding.

Some separatists within the movement extended this to a political philosophy that saw relationships between women as posing in themselves a solution to the contradictions of capitalism. This aroused hostility. Firstly, because many women at the conference lived with men, and also recognised that the real situation for the mass of people is that they are married and do live with men, therefore an equally crucial question was the nature of relationships with men and how those could be changed. Secondly, because it was felt that sexuality, like other areas of life, is conditioned by the society that we live in, and patterns of all relationships are determined by that society. Homosexual relationships are no more likely to be "happy" than any others. It is important to

[8] It is important to note that the majority of the Lesbian activists are not separatists.

[9] However, obviously if you are opposed to wages for housework, you would avoid joining a group whose main aim was the propagation of that idea.

[10] The only situation where something analogous to a "wage" for housework has been introduced was in Nazi Germany, where it was used to drive women out of the work force to provide large families to safeguard the future of the fatherland.

[11] See *Red Rag*, No. 5, "When is a Wage not a Wage", by Caroline Freeman.

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challenge our conditioning and the way we live, but until the base of our society can be changed there are no easy solutions.

These issues were clarified to a great extent by the conference in Edinburgh in July 1974. Two new demands were added to the four demands.[12] The first made clear the WLM's support for the Gay Movement and attempted to incorporate a statement concerning the relationship of female sexuality to politics.[13] The second was a demand for legal and financial independence for women. The adoption of these two demands allowed a solution to the embattled question of sexuality showing that it was possible to support the Gay Movement and to recognise the importance of the discussion on sexuality without necessarily being committed to separatism. The adoption of the second demand reflected a general concern to campaign around issues that had an immediate significance for women who were not actively involved with the movement and a need to deal with the immediate situation in society and demands that could be won, but which would help the long-term aims of the movement.

Problems of Structure

The second conference in Manchester in April 1975[14] showed a more experienced mood in the movement. The need for co-ordinated activity around the campaign against the Abortion (amendment) Bill highlighted for many the need for a more clear national identity as a movement. Conference endorsed the need for both a national information centre and a newspaper, thus increasing the potential for communicating and activity. These proposals were discussed in the context of creating a more effective network which would also construct an additional structure within the women's movement. This was a significant debate because, since its inception, there has been a deep hostility to the development of a formalised structure within the Women's Liberation Movement.

This rejection of formal structure stems from an hostility to the left and to the trade union movement which is seen by many as being simply a reflection of male-dominated society. Part of this rejection stems from anarchist and liberation tendencies which are opposed to structure and organisation on principle; part of it also from the recognition of the very real problems that women face within the trade union movement. Women are grossly under-represented, but it is not simply the structure and organisation of the labour movement which is the major cause; rather the general position of discrimination against women in society which is reflected in the trade union movement. Only a political change and a change in attitudes will alter this.

The women's movement has developed its own loose structure consistent with the criticism of other organisations and sometimes despite the opposition of small groups within the movement. A relationship between the national and specialist conferences has evolved whereby issues discussed at the specialist conferences are brought to the national conference. A remaining problem is the vacuum in which many of the local groups work and the difficulty of maintaining a national identity between conference. This will undoubtedly be improved by the establishment of the information centre. What was particularly important was that the proposals are ones which are a structural expression of the diversity of views within the movement, not a structure imported from another organisation, to be grafted on to the movement regardless of its suitability, but a reflection of the more developed understanding in the movement of its function and specific task.

General Characterisation of the Women's Movement

The majority of the activists in the women's movement come from the middle-strata, partly because they have more time available, perhaps also because they are not totally bogged down in the immediate pressures of life. The majority have also experienced a higher or further education which has enabled identification with the "ideological" nature of the issues raised by the WLM. This is a concern which stems from their experience of liberal academic education which involves the exploration and development of theory and ideas concerning society albeit within the framework of bourgeois education. The stringencies of capitalist society has ensured that the majority of working-class women are faced constantly with immediate issues and, crippled by our education system, therefore only identify with aspects of the WLM which impinge on their own immediate existence.

[12] (i) The end to all discrimination against Lesbians and the right to define our own sexuality. (ii) Legal and financial independence for women.

[13] This was raised in the debate in obvious ways; for example, on the question of sex education, the challenging of the concept of passive sexuality amongst females, but also the relationship between political involvement and challenge and how this affected personal relationships and self-identity.

[14] The original perspective was for conferences to be every six months, but the practical problem of finding accommodation large enough to cater for over 1,000 women on a shoe-string budget has limited the number of conferences.

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The development of the movement has helped to politicise many of these women from the middle-strata who would otherwise have remained indifferent or dependent upon the views of their husbands. A broad alliance challenging capitalism on a wide range of issues, central to the struggle for socialism in this country, has been strengthened by the impact of the WLM on wide sections of the middle-strata. The WLM has also had a profound effect on the trade union and labour movement. This offers the possibility of the development of strengthened links between different sections of society. An example of what could be possible was shown by the massive turnout on the demonstration against the James White (amendment) Bill to safeguard women's rights for abortion. The involvement with the labour movement in organising for this demonstration also enabled many feminists to glimpse the history of experience and struggle from which there are many lessons to be learnt.

The WLM at its conferences has consistently passed resolutions which express concern with liberation struggles in Southern Africa, Vietnam and other countries. Women's liberationists marched against the Industrial Relations Act and have been involved in many questions that have shown the understanding of the significance of class struggle for women's liberation. The movement and its activists is a potentially powerful ally in the struggle for socialism. Consistent involvement by progressive women and the maintaining and developing unity in action on the whole range of topics affecting women will determine whether the movement is sustained. Particularly important will be the further development of links with working-class women, who at the moment find it difficult to identify with aspects of the movement and therefore very rarely become directly involved, although many have been deeply affected by the ideas of the movement. This is partially caused by the consistent presentation of the negative aspects of the movement in the media. It is also caused by the existence of sections within the WLM whose public presentation and sectarian behaviour alienates working-class women. The abstract and complex nature of the discussions of many of the groups and of the literature prevents many working-class women from becoming involved. Such discussions can be valuable, but only when linked with a consistent recognition of the *real* situation that working-class women face and that involvement in changing that situation is the area where political connections will be made. The WLM, despite its weakness and divisions, has played a major role in revitalising the complex struggle against women's oppression. It has focused attention on what it means to be a woman in modern society and the profundity of changes that will be necessary to liberate women.

Developments in the Trade Union and Labour Movement

The WLM has clearly influenced developments in the trade union and labour movement; firstly, because of the impact of ideas on the movement; and, secondly, because of the increased involvement of activists from the WLM in their unions[15] and in trades councils.

The last ten years have seen a gradual widening-out of the debate on women in the trade union movement. The main issue until the mid-sixties was the question of equal pay. There has been a perceptible change in the approach to equal pay. Its importance to the question of women's financial independence, and its integral link with the social issues that affect women has raised the debate to a new level. It is now seen that the equal pay legislation will only affect a percentage of women and that the key question is making inroads in the vast differential that exists between male and female average earnings. Effective organisation and industrial action provides the solution to this question alongside the campaigning for the provision of all the facilities essential to enable women to participate fully in employment.

The debates and actions have widened out to the other "social" issues that are central to women's "right to work". The question of nurseries, child-care facilities, maternity leave and family allowances have become matters for policy decisions not only within the Women's TUC but also within individual unions. It was particularly significant that the Women's TUC in 1975 passed a resolution affirming women's right to control her own fertility, incorporating a demand for abortion on the NHS. This issue was only acceptable for debate as a result of the wide discussions and campaigning that has developed showing the link between women's biological role and her secondary position in employment.

The increasing demand within the trade union movement for further additional representation for women[16] comes out of the new understanding

[15] This is particularly noticeable amongst white collar/professional unions, such as ATTI, NUT & ASTMS.

[16] NUPE has recently allocated five executive seats to women; ASTMS has had a series of workshops on the question; ATTI has now instituted a standing committee on Women's Rights; AUEW (TASS) 1975 Conference created the post of National Women's Organiser.

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that sex discrimination prevents women from functioning socially and politically in society in the way that men do.

This has developed as a result of the discussions engendered by the WLM, but also as a result of the advantages of women meeting together, as developed by the experiences of the WLM to explore the total situation of women, rather than single facets of their situation.

The request for special provision comes from a totally different concept from that which established *separate* sections within unions for women workers. Historically this meant that women did not have the same rights as male members and had to function completely separately and had no democratic connection with the central decision-making bodies of their union. the separate became a way of siphoning women away from involvement in the mainstream of union activity. Positive discrimination means the establishment of groups and committees that will enable women to become integrated within the union structures to play their full role in all affairs of the union, by developing women's confidence and knowledge and to compensate for sex discrimination that has crippled the potential of so many.

The NCCL Women's Campaign has played an important bridging role between the trade unions and the WLM (as have some women's groups). This has begun to provide a cross-fertilisation of ideas and practical experiences between the WLM and trade unionists, which has been of essential mutual benefit. Another significant development has been the launching of the Working Women's Charter.[17] The ten demands of the charter make a clear link between women's role in the home and their role at work. It provides a basis for campaigning, reflecting the issues raised in the WLM but promoting them in a way that is meaningful to working-class women. The charter also specifies sharply in its final demand the ideological work that must be done to eradicate prejudice:

> "To campaign amongst women to take an active part in the trade unions and political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers and *to campaign among trade union men so that they may work to achieve this aim.*"

International women's year has given added publicity and impetus to the whole arena of women's rights. The TUC brought the 1964 Charter up to date with the *Twelve Aims For Working Women,* which incorporates a welcome section on women's *Right to Work,* showing that this is integrally linked with wider social provisions for women.

Some Questions of Ideology and Practice

There are many areas in this debate that need detailed attention from Marxists. In this section I have picked out ones that seem at this point to be important questions which are not covered sufficiently elsewhere in this article.

(i) Male Privilege

The specific problems and the detailed ways in which women are oppressed have often been overlooked by the labour movement and by Marxists. Women are oppressed as wage labourers in class society, but they suffer over and above this because they are women, because of their biological sex. This presents the specific problem that in both an objective and subjective way *men* are the partial instruments of women's oppression in class society. It is not society whose shoes are cleaned, whose meal is cooked and whose children are cared for: it is an individual man being serviced by an individual woman. Thus there is a real way in which it is necessary and correct to challenge the "privileges of the man". A privilege for a trade unionist and Communist is that it is the woman who cooks the meal, puts the kids to bed and cleans the house while the man recovers from work before rushing off to an "important meeting". It is essential that Communists and socialists begin to fight their own traditional prejudices in order to release many more women for political activity. It is necessary

[17] The London Trades Council launched the Charter in 1974. It has subsequently been adopted by many union branches and by some national conferences, including AUEW (TASS), ATTI & CPSA.

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to explore further the role that men are forced to play in the oppression of women, to make a realistic assessment of its function in capitalism and of the satisfaction privilege that men obtain from that role. Political and social separatism amongst women will only continue to flourish whilst men fail to take initiative on the political questions and those areas of personal practice that are oppressive to women.

> "Our demands are practical conclusions which we have drawn from the burning needs, the shameful humiliation of women in bourgeois society, defenceless and without rights. We demonstrate thereby that we recognise these needs and are aware of the humiliation of the women, *the privileges of the man.* That we hate, yes, we hate, everything that tortures and oppresses the women workers, the housewife, the peasant woman, the wife of the petty trader, yes, and in many cases, the women of the possessing classes."[18]

(ii) The Division of Labour and Women's Maternal Role

The debate concerning the division of labour in society commenced with Engels in "The Origins of the Family" and has continued to be a link-pin in the analysis of women's oppression. One of the significant contributions of the radical feminists, such as Shulamith Firestone, has been an emphasis on the question of women's maternal role as a prime cause in her oppression, both historical and current. It was a weakness in Irene Brennan's valuable series in the *Morning Star* and the current debate in *New Left Review*[19] that this has not been more thoroughly discussed.

The debate has tended to overlook the function of men within the home. The sexual division is not simply that of the female undertaking *all* household responsibilities. Men do perform activities which save paying the full cost of purchasing a service on the market, such as decorating, gardening, car maintenance, etc. Thus it is not a simple division. Secondly, women's role in the home is crucial to her subordination under capitalism, but a central part of her role is explicitly that of child-rearing, not simply general housework.

The results of the original division of labour, as Irene Brennan points out, were that men became property owners through the ownership of cattle, hence the "world historic defeat" of women (Engels). What has not been satisfactorily answered is why it was *men* that became the herders. An important factor must have been the physical restrictions on women; firstly, caused by repeated pregnancies; secondly, by the lengthy breast-feeding that was a necessary feature of primitive society. It is also important to note that it is child-bearing and rearing that constitute a very major factor in women's limited economic role today. It is very important to recognise the historical significance of women's maternal role and that it still plays a major part in limiting women's role in society. Until full and adequate child-care and maternity leave arrangements are made, until men take an equal share in the rearing of their children and until extensive arrangements are made for the care of children of all ages whilst their parents are at work during school holidays, and after school hours, women's liberation will remain a possibility only for those who choose not to have children or those who can pay someone else to carry out those activities.

The assumption of full social responsibility for child care would only be a partial solution. An equally important area is the right of women to choose when to have children. Safe and freely available contraception and the right to abortion are essential ingredients for that to become a real choice for the mass of women.

The maternal biological role of women raises special demands which are political class demands but which have historically been defined as side issues. They are now beginning to emerge as important issues for immediate strategy and essential conditions for the socialists of the future.

(iii) Culture and Male Domination

The phrase "male-dominated" is popularly used to describe most areas of our society. There has been a failure to define the precise meaning of "male-dominated" and to assess this as a factor in the re-creation of women's oppression. In all the decision-taking bodies of our society women are in a minority; our language, our art, our culture reflect the total domination of men.[20] It is obviously a numerical domination, but it is also a domination by the areas and types of activities that men customarily engage in. At its simplest men are active, involved in physical activities and important decisions: women are passive, caring and subservient to male authority.

One of the significant contributions of the women's movement is the gradual exploring of a

[18] Lenin—from Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question*, page 15 (1920).

[19] Wally Seccombe, "The Housewife and her Labour under Capitalism", NLR 83; Jean Gardiner, "The Role of Domestic Labour"; Margaret Coulson, Branka Magas, Hilary Wainwright, "Women and the Class Struggle", NLR 89.

[20] How many women are in parliament, orchestras, etc.?

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different and a positive identity for women, with a challenge of "male-domination". Sheila Rowbottom begins to cross this uncharted territory in *Women's Consciousness Man's World*. She says concerning women:

> "It is as if everything that relates only to us comes out in footnotes in the main text, as worthy of the odd reference. We come on the agenda somewhere between 'Youth and Any Other Business'. We encounter ourselves in men's culture."

Women's art, women's rock bands, women's films are all invaluable explorations of an assertion of a new identity going beyond the familiar intimacy of traditional women's skills. It is vital to assert the potential of women to be involved in and to be successful in all areas of life, particularly those previously deemed to be "men only". In a "male-dominated" world where women are defined as passive and subordinate the recognition that women are capable of self-activity and activity which generates change is a crucial stage in personal and political development.

A significant area of our culture that has been sharply challenged by the women's movement is the definition of women as sexual objects as expressed through the media, literature, art and all our social relations. Sexual consumerism restricts women's self-identity and devalues personal relationships. A woman's appearance is the commodity that purchased boy-friends and marriage. She retains her credibility by constantly refurbishing herself with cosmetics, diets and keeping up with the latest fashions. Above all, she is taught to be conscious of how she appears to men.

> "The essential way of seeing women, the essential use to which their images are put, has not changed. Women are depicted in a quite different way from men—not because the feminine is different from the masculine—but because the ideal spectator is assumed to be male and the image of women is designed to flatter him."[21]

The campaigns against sexual objectification, the challenging of sexist attitudes, attempts to develop literature and art which is revolutionary in its portrayal of women will all play a role in the transformation of the identity of women.[22] This complex relationship between women's role in society and cultural and political identity requires more serious attention from Marxists.

Strategy and Perspectives

The main purpose of this article has been to explore some of the implications of the Women's Liberation Movement, and to assess its influence and significance. The continued existence of an autonomous women's movement is not inevitable, neither is its progressive direction. A key factor will be the maintenance of broad unity and the further development of links with wider sections of women. Communists and socialists working in the WLM clearly can continue to play an important role in working for unified action and contributing connecting links with the broad movement.

Marxists, particularly through *Red Rag*, have provided significant theoretical contributions to the movement that have promoted an understanding of broad struggles and a realistic discussion of revolutionary strategy.

At times the need to defend the existence of the WLM has made analysis of its internal functioning a fraught process. A more searching internal analysis and a preparedness to relate experiences from other movements to the WLM has some important new features, but there has been a tendency to regard it as unique, and therefore unrelated to the lessons of other political struggles.[23]

The increased involvement of Communist and socialist women in local groups, as well as national meetings, will be essential in helping to develop a movement that has a continuing identity as a national movement, but can play an activist and supporting role within a locality.[24]

It is also important that Communist women maintain and develop their involvement within the WLM whilst demonstrating by the nature of their participation in activity and discussion the crucial relation of women's oppression to class struggle and the particular contribution of the Communist Party to that struggle. An integral part of this will be the continuing improvement and the development of more defined alliances in a movement which is self-defined as "socialist". It will also be important that the contacts established with the labour movement during the abortion campaign are strengthened. This must not simply be seen as a pragmatic step but as

[21] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, page 64, Penguin, 1972.

[22] The Women in Media Group have produced a code of non-sexist practice for media.

[23] Dave Cook's article on the Broad Left in the student movement has many implications for work within the WLM.

[24] There are no rules and regulations; any group of women can begin a WLM group.

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an essential part of connecting more closely areas of struggle that are unfortunately separated. The concern with ideas must be more closely connected with theories evolved from struggle, both immediate and historic.

The Labour Movement

The development of broad campaigns for women's rights within the labour movement must be maintained and strengthened.

The advances won in the labour movement must also be recognised. The recent (1975) TUC overwhelmingly accepted a composite motion calling for comprehensive family planning facilities and an extension of the availability of free abortion. It also passed a strongly-worded motion on equality of pay and opportunity. The linking of the wider social issues to the position of women in industry is an important step forward. The central question now will be the mobilisation of the labour movement on these issues, both around the "Twelve Aims for Working Women" and the demands of the "Working Women's Charter". This will provide a base for unified action in the labour movement. The winning of policy is only the first stage; the implementation of these demands will require national campaigning throughout the labour movement, actively supported by men and women trade unionists.

It will also be necessary to find ways of involving women's groups into the campaigning who are not directly of the labour movement to develop further the mutually beneficial links that have been established.

Central to the integration of the campaigns for women's rights will be the increased involvement of women in every area of the labour movement. It is essential that the movement through projection of policy shows that trade unionism is relevant to women. It is also necessary that accommodations are made to enable women to overcome their conditioning. The existing women's committees and conferences must be improved and, where necessary, new structures can be created. Historically, women's committees of trades councils were a vital force in initiating local activities for organising and recruiting women to trade unions. The Women's Advisory of the TUC was a dynamic body that had links, strong links, with constituent areas and played an important campaigning role. Detailed attention must be given to developing the organisations that exist to campaign more effectively amongst women, both locally and nationally. Women are the fastest growing section of the trade union movement; their continued involvement and their potential for playing a generally progressive role will be determined by the ability and willingness of male activists within the movement fighting existing prejudice and developing concrete ways of showing the formal commitment to women's rights.

Communist Party

The Communist Party Congress of 1971 adopted a resolution on women in society, which included a welcoming of the WLM and a recognition of the new impetus in the campaigns for women's rights. Discussion and activity on this issue has taken place throughout the party. The two key questions that have emerged are, firstly, the nature of our public work, both amongst women and on the question of women's liberation, and, secondly, the role which women play within the party.

Public work on the question has kept pace with developments and many comrades have been involved in initiating action in a wide range of areas. An initial suspicion of the value of working in the WLM has largely been overcome and there is an increasing recognition of the essential contribution that comrades are making within the movement. A measure of the strength of the Communist Party and the strategy of building a broad anti-monopoly alliance will be its continuing ability to weld within the membership the varied contributions of comrades active in different areas of struggle. The special responsibility of Communist militants of raising questions concerning women within the labour movement is an essential part of progress. Firstly, because of the results of generations of discrimination, women are not involved in all levels of the labour movement and therefore unable to raise these issues. Secondly, it is essential that women identify that their interests are integrally related to the class interests of all workers. If their only champions are outside the labour movement or non-existent, they will remain prey to reactionary ideas.

The Communist Party contains within it many different sections of workers who are affected by capitalism in different ways. The fusion of ideas and experience, the integration of lessons drawn from practical struggle and knowledge from the body of Marxist work is an essential function of our party. It is a special responsibility of Communists in the struggle for women's liberation that they enable the necessary connections to be made between the ideas of the WLM and the practical concerns of the labour movement within both those areas of our work.

> "The women of the working class will not feel irresistibly drawn into sharing our struggles for state power if we only and always

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> put forward that one demand—the demand for working class power. No! The women must be made conscious of the political connection between our demands and their suffering, needs and wishes."[25]

The "political connection", the presentation of the need for women's liberation is a complex question. All areas of our political work must reflect our concern and understanding of this issue. Whilst at the same time it is necessary to develop ways of contributing to a new identification for women in all our publications, the establishment of *Link*, the quarterly journal of Communist women, has made an important contribution in the public presentation of Communist views on questions affecting women. It has also helped in the development of the role of women comrades within the party. It will be an essential part of developing our work amongst women that its readership is extended and its valuable role more widely recognised.

The strengthening of the existing women's advisories and the development of new ones has begun to help in initiating local activity through the branches, but the full potential has not yet been reached. This discussion concerning the re-establishment of the women's advisories has highlighted their role. Their function must be to give women additional and special opportunities to develop political self-confidence, and to focus on the specific problems of women. The general aim is to enable women to become more effective Communists and militants and to participate fully within the structures of our party as a whole. It will be a sign of weakness if the women's committee is the sole expression of activity and concern on the question of women's liberation.

Fidel Castro, addressing the Cuban Congress of Women, highlighted the role of the women's conference; it is widely applicable:

> "You help the party and you help the leaders of the revolution; a party in which there is a very high percentage of men, so that it may seem a party of men, and a state of men and a government of men. The day has to come when we have a party of men and women and a leadership of men and women and a state of men and women and a government of men and women."

If we are to continue to increase the number of our active women comrades and to exercise a powerful influence on mass movements amongst women an essential ingredient will be the development of a "party of men and women". This will show in a concrete way in our determination to battle against traditional prejudice within the party, strengthen our understanding and guide the campaigns against women's oppression.

It is inconceivable that a revolutionary transformation of society could occur in an advanced capitalist country without the involvement of the mass of women. The WLM has helped to unleash a potentially powerful new force, linking different sections of women, which can be mobilised as part of the broad popular alliance against monopoly capital. Our strategy must be twofold. It is necessary to battle against prejudice and sexism within our party and the labour movement to facilitate the full involvement of women. At the same time it is essential that we take the practical and ideological demands for women's liberation wherever Communists are active.

[25] Lenin

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

The December issue of

Marxism Today

will contain an article by

SUE SLIPMAN

National Secretary of the

National Union of Students

on

WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

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Toward a Marxist View of Primary Medical Care in Britain*

Julian Tudor Hart

(We print below the text of a lecture delivered at the Communist University of London (CUL 7) in July 1975. The author is a general practitioner in a mining village in South Wales. He is well known for research on high blood pressure and bowel cancer.)

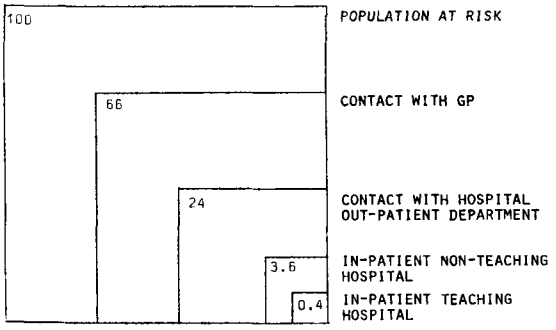
Primary care matters to communist students for two reasons.

Firstly, many of us, doctors and other health workers, are personally attracted to work in primary care because of opportunities for continuing relationships with a known local population which make political work easier; and for doctors at least, there is a degree of independence in primary care that makes innovation of new styles of care easier than in hospitals. Many are also attracted by the thought that at primary level simple things can be done simply, and that a good deal of high-technology in tertiary hospitals is either unproductive, or would be unnecessary if primary care were properly organised; they want to reverse the disproportionate concentration of staff and resources in high-technology hospital care deriving more from professional ambitions than the needs of sick people. Tied up with this feeling (for there is often less thought than feeling in it) is a view that primary care may be a means of escaping the rat-race while remaining socially useful. My own view is that opportunities for work in hospitals are being underestimated, but the widespread existence of this feeling about primary care is a fact, and has influenced recruitment to it during the past five years with qualitative effect.

Secondly, it is of importance because its clinical quality and mode of organisation are basic to the rest of the National Health Service (NHS) wherever we choose to work. As the point of entry to the entire care system, it rejects, selects, or refers centrally all the symptom-material presented by the population, and thus defines the content of care at all levels: and as the outer limit of the diagnostic and treatment system, it is closest and in most continuous relationship with the whole population at risk, and most able to combine preventive, educational and treatment functions in a unified approach to the conservation of health in populations. These relationships are shown quantitatively in the diagram[1].

PERCENTAGE ANNUAL CONTACT WITH VARIOUS LEVELS OF THE NHS

(CARTWRIGHT 1967)



Primary Care and General Practice

Primary care is not identical with general practice; it includes all the points of first contact for sick people, or even of well people at risk, with the NHS. It includes such industrial and accident services as we have, and the many services supplementary to general practice and previously neglected by it, such as maternity and child welfare clinics (the integration of these with general practice as planned by the 1974 reorganisation is of course very incomplete). But general practice, its history and ideology, certainly dominates all our ideas about primary care, and no alternative system can be planned without an understanding of it, which must begin in historical and class terms.

Most doctors, and much of the laity, see present-day general practitioners as the somewhat shorn survivors of a Golden Age located somewhere towards the end of the 19th century. According to this mythology, general practitioners (GPs) were

* Primary medical care is that part of the health service that deals with first contacts: general practice and former local authority services such as home nursing, health visiting, infant and maternity clinics. Secondary care is that provided by general hospitals, and tertiary care is provided by very specialised hospitals.

[1] Cartwright, A., *Patients and their doctors*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967.

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then well-to-do despots of discriminating benevolence, whose sturdy independence was founded on income from fees-for-service in an open market; this idyllic situation was first breached by Lloyd George, then trampled upon by Aneurin Bevan, and GPs have declined ever since to the status of capitation-slaves, submerged in the infinity of trivial demand released by the removal of financial barriers. The myth will be revived by contact with the EEC, where fee-earning entrepreneurism is far more deeply rooted throughout medicine, and doctors' incomes are generally from two to four times as great as ours.

There are some elements of truth in this myth, for those market towns and affluent suburbs where doctors always had "quality" practices, access to cottage hospital beds, and the panel of capitation payments was always a lucrative sideline rather than the staple. Rich people had rich doctors, but most people were poor, and so were their GPs. The relatively simple social structure of Britain, without a peasantry and with exceptionally early development of a socially and sometimes geographically distinct industrial working class, led to a mass demand for large numbers of cheap doctors for cheap people.

Prepaid primary care systems, with payment unrelated to use, were already widespread in the 1830s, and formed a large part of general practice by the time of the Medical Act of 1858, which formally recognised the physicians, surgeons and apothecaries as a single profession. As well as these "Clubs", based on a few pence per person at risk collected weekly on commission by an agent, doctors received salaried income for work done for paupers both in and out of the workhouses, under the Poor Law. The income per item of service for both of these was pitiful, and ensured that the doctor worked rapidly for very long hours, without any real possibility of meeting the minimum clinical standards of the time. Fee earning was not the staple income of most GPs, but was highly prized because it appeared to be the only means to achieve both economic security and the professional satisfaction of work done to contemporary standards of quality. These standards were established by the teaching hospital consultants, who alone had leisure and resources to adhere to them.

These standards never were appropriate to the primary care situation, but until the mid-1930s disparity between ideal and reality made little difference to outcomes; personal medical care had a negligible effect on survival or chronic disability, except for the prompt recognition of acute obstetric and abdominal emergencies where surgical intervention was already effective. High quality medicine was important less for what it actually did, than for its promise of what it might do in the future; the teaching hospitals monopolised the manpower and machinery of discovery, and with these the definition and re-definition of the whole medical ideology—what a good doctor was, what he did, and how he did it.

Historical Background

By the late 19th century, the Club system and Insurance Friendly Societies covered most industrial workers, and a good many of their dependants. The Club schemes were usually based on locally negotiated contracts between mutual-aid consumer groups, often defined by a common industry, and either individual doctors, or sometimes the BMA on their behalf; they were the effective employers of the doctors in most industrial areas[2]. The Lloyd George Act placed this system under the state and virtually eliminated the nascent elements of local control, except in the mining areas (these were finally extinguished by Bevan in the 1948 Act, without a struggle; presumably because Labour cannot fight on two fronts at once); at the same time it stabilised GPs' incomes, and substantially increased them.

Despite this the 1911 Act was almost universally opposed by the doctors, because they saw marketed fees-for-service as the means to a better bargaining position, to quality care, and to professional self-respect. The teaching hospital consultants had successfully imprinted their definition of quality on the plain doctors of the poor, who had no hope of achieving it in conditions of work that permitted only a deadly routine of perfunctory drudgery; they could see no escape from this other than fee-earning from richer patients. The ideological initiative remained with the top consultants.

The Fabian state liberalism of the Webbs, expressed in the minority report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, proposed a state

[2] *The battle of the clubs, Lancet,* pamphlet reprint, 1896.

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medical service with salaried doctors working in public buildings, publicly staffed and equipped. According to the mythology, this was thwarted only by the reactionary doctors who would have none of it; and again in 1948, it is said, but for the opposition of the doctors we could have had a salaried service from health centres. This evaluation is wrong, more so in 1948 than 1911, and yet more so now. Of course, the majority of doctors did oppose both schemes, but was there ever any serious intention of either government to operate them? Is it not more likely that both were grateful that the doctors were prepared to attract the blame for the dropping of reforms in which neither government had much interest? It goes without saying that a primitive, small-entrepreneur group such as the GPs then were, uniquely able to practise with a pocketful of tools in the front parlour or an old shop, would cling to its miserable peasant plots for as long as possible, for fear of something worse; but the very conditions that permit such cottage industry, deny the practice of scientific medicine of which all doctors, at least at some time in their lives, wish to be a part.

1911 and 1948

Already by 1911, and certainly by 1948, a large proportion of GPs could have been mobilised for a salaried state service from health centres with supporting staff and proper equipment, if such an alternative had ever really been offered. Despite evidence of massive medical support for salaried service from health centres in the BMA's referendum of 1944[3], health centre development was abandoned by ministerial circular, without parliamentary debate, several months before the NHS Act came into force, well before the peak of the BMA's anti-NHS hysteria.

Both the Liberals in 1911 and the Labour government of 1948 were creating a cheap mass service for cheap people, with a policy of paying doctors relatively well to run a public service for their own profit. Both knew well enough that the conditions of work in most practices precluded good clinical work, and that there was no reason to assume that doctors would spend money on premises, staff, and equipment out of their own pockets, on the massive scale required to bring primary care into the 20th century. Both assumed that the quality of primary care, unlike any other discipline, could bear no relation to the material resources invested in it; or perhaps more likely, that serious progress in medicine would take place only in hospitals.

We may assume that in the future as well as the past, many or most doctors will oppose any re-organisation of care that demystifies their role, exposes them to peer and consumer criticism, or impairs their bargaining position for privileged status and income; but because mystification, dogmatism and privilege all ultimately contradict the effective delivery of medical science, there is a basis for mobilisation of decisive sections of doctors and other health workers for support of government programmes of genuine expansion and investment in health care. That was in fact the case with the hospital service in 1948, when the support of the consultants was ultimately won not just by "choking their mouths with gold", but by delivering the hospitals from bankruptcy and offering a bold programme of expansion and development.

There was no such programme for general practice; the only health centre built (at Woodberry Down) might almost have been designed to prove that health centres were expensive and ineffective. Credit for the survival and ultimately rapid growth of an independent ideology of primary care must go to those GPs in the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Medical Practitioners' Union (MPU) who responded positively to their isolation from hospital practice by clearly defining an independent, patient-orientated role[4].

Programmes of Health Conservation

This ideology of primary care has been progressive in its acceptance of the NHS, of psychosocial components of care previously ignored or rejected, of a team approach with an emphasis on continuity of personal care rather than more efficient methods of exploiting patients and ancillary staff, and a positive approach to peer criticism. The former exclusive preoccupation with individual doctor-patient transactions is beginning to give way to whole-population strategies, with increasing emphasis on preventive and anticipatory methods. For the first time there is serious interest in programmes for health conservation, rather than terminal salvage or palliation.

It became fully defined and struck deep roots in the years following the 1966 package deal, when the government, appalled by the situation in the USA where primary care was all but dead, decided that re-investment in general practice might save it from the financial implications of running all medical care from hospitals. The 1966 package, which shifted most of the cost of premises and staff to the state and ended the pool system of payment that had discouraged any expansion of the clinical field of the GPs' work, had been developed over many years by the MPU. Lacking any detailed policy for the development of primary care, the BMA stole it,

[3] Eckstein, H., *The English Health Service*, Oxford University Press, 1959.

[4] Royal College of General Practitioners, *The future general practitioner: learning and teaching*, 1972.

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agreed the contract, and thereby gave up what remained of the material foundation for the claim to independent contractor status. The package coincided with new policies of encouraging the attachment of district nurses and health visitors to GPs, an ambitious programme of health centre construction, and improvements in GPs' earnings relative to consultants. These culminated in the proposals for the 1974 reorganisation, with substantial redeployment of resources away from the hospital sector, toward primary care.

The Present Situation

The present situation is complex, unstable and contradictory. On the one hand, a large majority of doctors work in partnership (only 20 per cent were single-handed in 1971, compared with 43 per cent in 1951), 97 per cent employ some kind of office staff, more than half have attached district nurses and/or health visitors, and about 15 per cent work from health centres. A majority have no private patients and do not want them, and while private care is expanding in hospitals, it is virtually disappearing in general practice. Nearly all GPs now have direct access to laboratory and most X-ray diagnostic services, and a rapidly increasing proportion use them regularly. Practices are for the most part much better organised, about two-thirds operating appointment systems. A substantial and influential minority of GPs attend hospital postgraduate medical centres regularly, and in many cases formulate their teaching programmes. Vocational training schemes have expanded rapidly; for the first time we have young GPs trained specifically in the skills of primary care, and many teaching practices have developed styles of continuing audit and mutual criticism[5].

Against this we must set a failure to reduce significantly the average list size, which remains at about 2,500 in England and Wales and 2,000 in Scotland: and a dependence on immigrant doctors, particularly in the areas of highest morbidity and lowest clinical traditions, who despite usually long and thorough hospital training, often lack training appropriate to primary care. The average face-to-face time of each consultation is only five minutes[6].

The clinical quality of much primary care is still very low, and the widely different standards of investigation and control still assumed for hospital and primary care represent a continuing poverty of thought, action and resource among most GPs, as much as a rational reflection of different needs. Despite the large number of ancillary staff attachments, very few primary care teams really function as such, with regular discussion of strategy and objectives, and audit of results[7].

Most doctors retain an entrepreneurial outlook, and neither the Department of Health (DHSS) nor the RCGP has a convincing strategy for influencing the work of backward or irresponsible doctors who have remained outside all the progressive developments described, or (more frequently) have simply adapted them to the satisfaction of their own wants rather than the needs of their patients, by introducing impersonal business methods without regard to continuity, aimed at extending work laterally (more patients and higher incomes) rather than in depth (more time, better quality, new health strategies). The promise of planning in the 1974 reorganisation, toothless enough in the hospitals, in primary care is wholly empty. The Family Practitioner Committees, carried over virtually unchanged from the old Executive Councils, have no power to pursue active policies, and inherit a tradition of administering a complaints procedure but otherwise leaving GPs alone to do as much or as little, and in any direction, as they want; the GP remains an independent policy-maker running "his" practice exactly as he pleases, within extraordinarily wide limits.

The government's redeployment of resources toward primary care will be an illusory benefit if, as is likely, it further reduces the ability of the hospitals to cope with the work referred to them. Hospital out-patient departments are used wastefully and about 40 per cent of first referrals and 50 per cent of follow-up visits would be unnecessary if good quality primary care were generally available[8]: but without an effective strategy for securing that improvement overall, and not only in a minority of innovating practices, cutbacks in the hospitals will make bad situations worse. Moreover, high quality practice in the most deprived areas invariably unearths quantities of neglected gross disease that increase rather than reduce the hospital load. Simple things should be done simply, but there is a great deal of effective and necessary care that demands the highest levels of technology and extremely specialised skills, and we have no real evidence of how much of this is really useful, and how much reflects redundant empire-building; this is not a

[5] Royal College of General Practitioners, *Present state and future needs of general practice* (3rd ed.), *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, suppl., 1973.

[6] Buchan, I. C., Richardson, I. M., *Time study of consultations in general practice*, Scottish Health Service Studies No. 27, Scottish Home & Health Department, 1973.

[7] Gilmore, M., Bruce, N., Hunt, M., *The work of the nursing team in general practice*, Council for Education & Training of Health Visitors, London, 1974.

[8] Wade, O. L., Elmes, P. C., *An analysis of out-patient referrals*, Update, 1969, *1*, 721.

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suitable field for intuitive assessment and guesswork, and in the absence of real evidence, we should remain suspicious of economic arguments that would virtually halt technological innovation in areas like renal dialysis, transplant surgery, and new techniques of diagnosis such as fibre-endoscopy.

These limitations are understood by the large number of GPs who are devoted to their work and their patients, do not see their work from a business perspective, and are genuinely worried about the future. If we can develop a clear and convincing strategy for the future of primary care, these doctors can be won to the Broad Alliance for socialism; and for other health workers this is a large majority.

A Strategy for the Future

Our strategy in the broadest terms—a Broad Left Alliance to hold and extend social gains already made, and to solve the economic and political crisis of capitalism by taking into social ownership and democratic control the commanding heights both of the economy and the state machine—is not by itself sufficient to mobilise decisive sections of health workers for active and organised struggle for socialism; they need a clear and feasible programme for the solution of the problems of which they have personal experience in their work, and not only those of an immediate economic nature. These concern the future of the NHS and of health care, as parts of a more just and beautiful society.

The following eight questions, and the answers to them, are tentative and personal. With discussion, amendment, and extension, they might serve as the beginning of a Marxist strategy for change in primary care, for which we could work within the broad left movement. The emphasis on doctors compared with other health workers reflects the limitations of my own experience, but may to some extent be justified by their hitherto dominant role in defining the nature and content of medical care.

The Primary Care Team

1. How should doctors relate functionally to other health workers in the primary care team? Until very recently, primary care teams had little real existence outside the minds of health planners and the rhetoric of the DHSS. Now that a few teams are really working, with regular consultation in both directions between all members, the power of the doctors is moving from the divine to the secular; divisions of labour will increasingly be based on skills actually present, and necessary to the work in hand, rather than paper qualifications. Health visitors and attached nurses have been widely used for delegated investigation and follow-up, much less for first-contact assessments.

Development of a nurse-practitioner grade (feldsher) has been widely discussed, both as a solution to the shortage of doctors and as a step towards a more appropriate intermediate technology. A randomised controlled trial of nurse-practitioners in Canada[9] has shown that nurses can handle two-thirds of first contacts as well as doctors in terms of process and outcome, including patient-satisfaction, providing they have specific training in the structured decision-making required for safe primary care (which the doctors had probably not had), and that they carry half the case-load of the doctors, and so have twice as much time for each case.

In measures of process, both doctors and nurse-practitioners were rated as adequate in only about two-thirds of cases. In our developed industrial nation of high literacy, introduction of a medical assistant grade would seem less rational than changes in medical education designed to train doctors more shortly, simply, and directly for their future roles, as outlined in item 2. Doctors trained specifically in the tasks of leading a health care team with a known population, and in the skills of applying medical science effectively in particular situations of varying constraint, could make care teams a reality rather than a platitude, or a euphemism for bigger business organisation. This role would have to be opened up and made accessible to other workers in the team.

Changes in Medical Education

2. What changes do we need in medical education? It follows from this, that we must define new objectives in training the doctor, and new sources of supply for our medical students. We want doctors trained in innovation in real situations, trained to recognise what is new and useful in medical science and to adapt it to their own area of responsibility, and to recognise what has become obsolete, root it out and discard it. Both processes must operate through a health team which must understand and agree collectively on the implementation of new methods and the discarding of old ones, and cannot simply be ordered to work in a new way.

Students taken directly from school, and selected for a combination of academic success and apparent similarity to the generation of doctors they replace, will be poor material for such teaching, lacking real experience of any part of the NHS, and with motivations that are at best romantic, if they are not cynical or mercenary. If an eventual majority of places in medical schools were reserved for mature students, with three or more years' experience in other roles in the NHS, we could build up a body of students with a more realistic appreciation of the

[9] Spitzer, W. O., and others, *The Burlington randomised trial of the nurse-practitioner*, New England Journal of Medicine, 1974, *290*, 251.

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service they were to rejoin and change, a more critical approach to the temporary acquisition of unused knowledge, and a better eye for the skills and knowledge that would really matter to them in their work[10].

The attempt to train encyclopaedic doctors once for a lifetime has already been discarded in theory, but the necessary expansion of lifelong postgraduate education is still in its infancy. Once it becomes clear that no one should attempt work beyond a competence which can be extended where there is a need for it at any time before retirement, we shall be able to train doctors more shortly and simply in the undergraduate phase. These simpler doctors should also differ less from the people they care for; the most important questions should not be whether they will fit in socially with their senior colleagues, but whether they will be able to communicate easily, effectively, and on a fraternal level with their patients. Academic qualifications being equal, students who have followed common social pathways should have preferential selection over those who have followed privileged pathways.

Generalists or Specialists?

3. Do we want primary generalists or primary specialists? On the whole, progressive doctors in primary care have been hostile to suggestions of specialism at primary level. They have emphasised the family as an indivisible population unit, and continuity of personal care as some guarantee of conscience and personal responsibility. There are important elements in this view that must be conserved[11], but it is difficult to believe that primary care of high quality can continue for more than another 10 or 15 years on a completely generalist basis[12]. Where health centres serve populations of 12,000 or so, there seems no reason why patients should not get a skilled opinion on their eyes, ears, skins and so on. without referral, and the comprehensive industrial medical services and accident services that we desperately need would drive a coach and horses through the idea of general practice as monopolist of primary care.

Primary doctors have got to get beyond the proprietorial and paternalistic tradition of responsibility in medical care (much better than no responsibility, still common enough), and develop an effective style and machinery of communication that will avoid conflict, confusion, and duplication, or decisions on incompletely shared evidence. This will be possible if the resources of computer information storage and retrieval, and of record linkage between all levels of the NHS, are fully used, and if the patient enters far more actively into the decision-making and communicating process, possibly including responsibility for his or her own basic health record.

Health Workers and the Hospital Sector

4. Do we want primary health workers to work also in the hospital sector? The hospitals should be the centres of innovation for their districts, and primary care should be seen as the periphery of their work. The isolation of British primary doctors from hospital work is harmful, and is based on the entrepreneur tradition of general practice rather than the needs of patients.

Hospital work by GPs, apart from the control of beds for relatively simple conditions where social circumstances preclude care at home, should relate to their need to acquire and retain skills needed for their main work, rather than hospital shortages in out-patient staff. Doctors and other workers in the team should all be able to rotate back into hospital work every few years, for spells of one to six months.

Conservation of Health

5. How can the emphasis in primary care be shifted from almost exclusive concern with the treatment of disease by surgery and drugs, to the conservation of health? In the capitalist world, two forces push the doctors to their obsession with individual doctor-patient transactions in illness, rather than conservative or anticipatory strategies applied to populations. The first is fee-for-service payment. We no longer have it, and for this reason British medicine is in some ways exceptionally critical and progressive, particularly in comparison with most other West European countries; but we retain habits of thought based upon it, particularly in our conceptions of the nature of disease. With all its many faults, the capitation system does permit, if it does not encourage, the definition of a population for which the care team is responsible, the beginning of all real health planning.

Secondly, there is the presence of a profit-oriented pharmaceutical industry, by whose grace and favour nearly all our journals, and much of our post-graduate education, are carried on. The distortion of clinical behaviour produced by this cannot be over-estimated; it freezes us permanently into a situation where no medical transaction is complete without a prescription, and where all placebos must be pharmacologically active. The first step must be the nationalisation of the industry, its integration into the NHS, and the redeployment of

[10] Hart, J. T., *Proposals for assisted entry to medical schools for health workers as mature students, Lancet,* 1974, *2,* 1,191.

[11] Forman, J. A. S., *Personal and continuing care from group practice,* Update plus, 1971, 265.

[12] Higgins, P. M., *Specialisation in general practice,* Update, 1974, 1,573.

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its brainwashing resources to education of doctors in the rational use (and non-use) of drugs.

Illusion or Proved Effect?

6. How can the elements of illusion and unvalidated assumption be replaced by care of proved effect? This is a problem for the whole of medicine, but in primary care it may in some ways be easier to initiate change, and the challenge and opportunity are greater. Primary care generates the demands that hospitals must satisfy, and if they generated different demands this would have ultimate effect throughout the NHS. The illusory element in care originated in the religious function of medicine, which was until recently its main component; to make painful lives and cruelly random deaths tolerable, not only by surgical and pharmacological palliation, but by the effort to prove that everything was done that could have been done—a necessary opiate of the people.

The scientific element in medicine was important not so much for what it could really achieve in altering outcome, so much as a growing point for the medical science that quite recently—about 1930-35—began to be really effective. The persistence of illusion depends on social inertia, on the fee-for-service transaction and the commodity-ridden perception of disease that has influenced our classification of disease and therefore our clinical behaviour, and on those social privileges that have depended on the mystification of the laity. All treatments, old and new, should be validated by controlled trial: the rate of real innovation (as opposed to pharmaceutical inflation and surgical adventurism) is not great, and we should stand by the demand that randomised controlled trials should precede the large-scale adoption of new medical and surgical techniques, as well as being used to sort out the real value of established methods.

This does not imply uncritical acceptance of all the views put forward by Cochrane[13] now adopted by the DHSS establishment; broadly they accept the crisis of capitalism as an opportunity for radical redistribution of resources in a more rational NHS, by strategies of influencing the corridors of power rather than pressing for democratic control. They embrace corporate solutions, and present a philosophical base for retreat from liberal commitments in the NHS. But we must accept Cochrane's principle of argument from evidence rather than assertion, and that the elements of medical care can be quantified as much as any other category in science; the most powerful support for the Marxist case comes from precisely such a quantified appraisal of all the elements in the health care equation. These questions lie at the heart of clinical medicine, and clinical medicine lies at the heart of medical care and all its professions. It is illusory to imagine that a revolutionary programme for medicine can be elaborated solely in terms of broad social organisation, without regard to clinical content; we do not want only the medical care of the rich writ larger for the poor, we want a new medicine for a classless society.

The practice of medicine develops slowly, even at times of rapid scientific advance, and it already has some features appropriate to a future society; to mobilise the most progressive and honest sections of health workers we must be able to show convincingly that our social strategy will lead to a more effective and humane application of science than is possible in our present society. This cannot be worked out only in general terms; specific pathways have got to be explored before useful general terms can be fully worked out. For this task it is essential that at least some of our Marxists should be involved in clinical innovation; without this our ideas will be derivative, worked out within limits defined by non-Marxists, and we shall be unable to work out a genuinely new and independent line of march.

The Mass of the Population

7. How can the mass of the population be drawn into active concern and action for the conservation of its own health? Even the most limited strategies for treatment of established disease run up against serious obstacles of patient non-compliance, unless patients can be drawn into informed and responsible participation in their own care. In the much more promising areas of primary and secondary prevention, active co-operation by the people is essential.

The most ardent evangelists of health promotion and anticipatory care cannot be effective if the mass of the people have a fatalistic approach to their own health. The struggle for socialism rests in large part on higher expectations, bigger demands on life, and rising self-respect; this must include rejection of the shortened, physically impaired, and spiritually impoverished lives that were accepted as natural and inevitable by past generations of workers. It must include rejection of the accumulation of personal possessions (including commodity-medical care), and passive consumption, as a substitute for a full, active and independent life, and must therefore reject the dependent role allocated by doctors to patients.

Democratic Control

8. How can effective forms of democratic control be developed in primary care? This question is more complex and difficult than at first appears. There is a most pressing immediate need for the setting-up of effective patients' committees to assist in the

[13] Cochrane, A. L., *Effectiveness and efficiency*, Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, 1972.

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running of health centres (there appear to be none of these at present with real evidence of consistent long-term work, above a merely symbolic level), and for the involvement of trades councils and trade union branches, particularly in areas of one or two dominant industries. Until our own people have done this, and reported their experience in the medical press, discussion of local control will remain rhetorical. There is also urgent need for effective representation from the labour movement on the Community Health Councils.

Even more difficult is the question of central versus local innovation and control. As in local government, it is not always true that progressive innovation is peripheral rather than central; nothing is less dependable than the liberalism of the central bureaucracy, but nothing is more bigoted than the peripheral aldermen. We cannot sort this out without far more new experience of serious involvement of the labour movement in health issues, but we must fight consistently for the principle of elected representation at all levels of control in the NHS.

Economic Demands of Doctors

9. What is our attitude to the economic demands of doctors and to medical professionalism? The left liberalism that normally passes for socialism in Britain has hitherto identified the medical profession almost completely with the ruling class. Individual doctors who were declared socialists were regarded as wholly exceptional, whose position was determined by convictions that had overcome their natural interests; doctors as a group were natural allies of privilege and reaction. The theory is close enough to observed fact to remain popular, particularly with progressive doctors since it stresses their unique personal virtue.

This view is superficial, and ignores the real and changing relationship of doctors to their means of production (education, buildings, equipment and supporting staff). In no real sense are they self-employed or independent; they are wage-earners employed by the state to carry on a public service, they do not pay for their training, or any significant part of the equipment they use (if we include in this laboratory and X-ray diagnostic facilities and the cost of drugs), and their share of the cost of supporting staff and buildings is only one-third or less. They are paid to look after populations at risk, not for individual episodes of sickness. The fact that on this material base there still remains a cultural and social superstructure quite inappropriate to it, is the challenge to serious socialists among health workers; it is the guarantee of the *possibility* of shifting a decisive proportion of health workers, and particularly doctors, from their traditional position as a reserve of reaction, to a vanguard of progress.

The income differential between doctors and other workers, and particularly other health workers, is important but not decisive. The wages of the various kinds of health workers are in fact converging; GPs now earn about two and a half times as much as a trained laboratory technician, compared with nearly five times as much in 1948, and the movement of nurses' wages has been in the same direction. While many established doctors, including those on the left, are exposed to a corrupting influence by very high earnings, particularly on the fringes of the NHS, no significant group of doctors is going to join a movement with a reduction of their earnings as a principal aim.

There is good evidence that an increasing proportion is at least as concerned about the conditions of work and opportunity to use their skills effectively, as it is with earnings; this concern coincides with the interests of patients and lays the basis for a campaign with the people rather than against them. This opportunity will increase as it becomes clear even to the doctors that, like the teachers, those who work entirely in the public service can expect little mercy from a ruling class that now finds itself in economic difficulties, and does not itself use the social services by normal pathways. The doctors are going to have to find new allies. Their methods of struggle should reflect this need, and require careful thought and more consultation with other health workers.

In much the same way, medical professionalism has been assumed to be a necessarily reactionary force, tying the doctors to other even more reactionary groups such as lawyers, and perpetuating the deception of the laity and the snobbery of doctors. However, the situation in Britain is in some ways a special case. Our professional organisations do not have the same tradition or power of disciplinary repression of progressive methods of care that exists in Belgium and France[14], and the RCGP has already been referred to as playing a progressive role in redefining the content and ethics of primary care. Is it not possible that we could succeed in popularising a different definition of the medical profession, in social terms corresponding to the interests of doctors and patients on the brink of a socialist transformation of society? Loyalty to the progressive and humane core in the historical tradition of medical science is not an asset to be thrown away or handed over without struggle to the midgets of the medical establishment. Doctors should most certainly rejoin the human race, but the people we aim to help will not thank us for throwing away half our ammunition before we join them.

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[14] "Groupe d'étude pour une réforme de la médecine," "L'Ordre des Médecins," *Lettre d'Information*, 82/83, Nov./Dec. 1974, rue Belliard 37, 1040 Brussels.

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Review Article:

Byzantine Feudalism

Professor Robert Browning

A recent volume of the French Marxist journal *Recherches Internationales* (No. 79 [1974]) reprints in French translation ten recent articles on Byzantine Feudalism by Soviet, Bulgarian, Rumanian and Yugoslav specialists. The question whether Byzantine society, and especially late Byzantine society, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, was in any meaningful sense feudal, is one which has been in the forefront of discussion at international congresses of Byzantine studies and elsewhere for many years. It has aroused interest beyond the narrow range of specialists. One of the most useful surveys of the "state of play" was published ten years ago by the Japanese historian K. Watanabe (*Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences* 5 [1965]).

The dispute is not just about the meaning of words, though it is sometimes reduced to this level. It is in essence about the validity of the type of historical generalisation involved in postulating a succession of stages in the development of the relations of production. Those who reject the concept of Byzantine feudalism generally define feudal society in terms of specific political institutions and of a particular kind of hierarchy of personal relations which are both legal and moral. Those who accept it think of feudalism as a stage in the development of the productive forces of society marked by the predominance of agriculture and of a natural economy and by the institutionalisation of large-scale landed property through which the peasant, the primary producer, is exploited, paying part of the new value he creates to the owner of the land in the form of labour, deliveries in kind, or money.

Problems of Definition

Most non-Marxist historians—but by no means all—either expressly deny the existence of feudal society in Byzantium or burke the issue by speaking of "feudalism" in inverted commas. They tend to take up one or other of two positions. They may argue that Byzantine society belongs to those mainly oriental societies in which there was no real private property in land, and in which the state was patrimonial and in a certain measure entrepreneurial. This argument is presented in Marxist terms by those who class Byzantine society as an example of the "Asiatic mode of production", along with the hydraulic societies of the great river valleys in Egypt, Mesopotamia and elsewhere. This view was critically examined by the French historian Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou in "Byzance et le mode de production asiatique" (*La Pensée* 129 [1966]), an article regrettably omitted from the present collection because it was readily accessible in France. The argument is based on a fundamental misconception of property relations in the Byzantine world and of the purely fiscal nature of Byzantine state intervention in production.

More frequently the anti-feudalists argue that Byzantine society represents a continuation into the middle ages of the social and economic relations of the ancient world, like an erratic block in geology. This view has been set out with maximum lucidity and scholarship by the eminent French historian Paul Lemerle in a number of publications. A brief statement of the continuity thesis in Marxist terms is to be found in Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, London, 1974, 265-293.

Either of these arguments may be accompanied by the observation that the apparently feudal features found in late Byzantine society—including the personal oath of fealty—are the result of Western influences and not endogenous in Byzantine society.

Main Features of Byzantine Feudal Society

The view that essential feudal relations developed independently in Byzantine society is most cogently developed by the distinguished Yugoslav historian Georgije Ostrogorski—who never, I think, describes himself as a Marxist—in his by now classical book *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954), of which only a few pages are reprinted in the present collection. Subsequent study by Marxist scholars has concentrated upon elucidating the particular features of Byzantine society which made Byzantine feudalism often so different in its profile from that of Western Europe, though so similar in the essential nature of the system of exploitation which it embodied. The studies here reprinted are admirable examples of the way in which scrupulous study of particular events and

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institutions are illumined by understanding of the more fundamental features of the society under examination and contribute in their turn to the refinement of that understanding. The authors propound no common doctrine; on the contrary, each of them suggests a new programme of research to be undertaken. And their conclusions cannot be adequately summarised in a paragraph.

At the risk of gross over-simplification, the following are suggested as the main particular features determining the development of Byzantine feudal society. The coexistence in full vigour in the early middle ages of various forms of property, state, communal and individual, surviving from antiquity. The continued existence of a centralised state, with its sophisticated bureaucracy. The survival of ancient cities well into the middle ages, their subsequent decline, and their resurgence in the tenth to twelfth centuries. The special position of the capital city, Constantinople. What is striking is how, in spite of the absence of the "anarchy" which accompanied the growth of feudalism in the West, the various forms of property come together to give rise to a régime of large-scale property based on feudal rent. The differing nature of feudal immunities in East and West is examined and explained. The question of the existence of centralised feudal rent is posed, without being definitively answered. And a whole range of problems is thrown up which only further research can solve.

Critical and Creative

This book is an excellent example of the critical and creative—and totally undogmatic—way in which Marxist scholars treat a large historical problem, and one which is by no means academic in the pejorative sense. For many of the questions examined are closely related to those which arise in practice today in the politics of so-called underdeveloped countries today. If I were, say, an Ethopian, I should find these studies of much more than theoretical interest.

Those who read Russian will find a more recent study of many of the same questions in an article by Z. V. Udaltsova and K. H. Osipova, "The Peculiarities of Feudalism in Byzantium" (*Voprosy Istorii*, 1974, 10, 98-117), which would certainly have been included by the French editors had it appeared in time.

Discussion Contribution on:

Trotsky and the Popular Front

Monty Johnstone

Part II

In June 1936 Trotsky had correctly appreciated the revolutionary mood of the most militant sections of the French workers. But, as Lenin had cautioned, "revolutionary tactics cannot be built on a revolutionary mood alone. Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the world over)."[74] A crucial element for such an appraisal was at hand in the results of the general election which had just been held in France.[75]

Marxists should not, of course, look at election results statically and formalistically. They need to be analysed dynamically in their social context to assess trends and revolutionary potential. Nevertheless "universal suffrage is an index of the maturity of the various classes in the understanding of their

[74] "*Left-wing*" *Communism*, *C.W.*, Vol. 31, p. 63, Emphasis in original.

[75] Ernest Mandel, who has criticised my use of election figures in the evaluation of French events (E. Mandel, *Class Consciousness and the Leninist Party*, Colombo, n.d.—1970?—pp. 6-7), would do well to consider the prime importance accorded by Lenin to Russian election results, not only in the Soviets but also in the city council elections just held, in the autumn of 1917 to determine whether the time had come to organise the October Revolution. (See Lenin, *C.W.*, Vol. 26, pp. 80, 183-4, 195.) Indeed we find Trotsky himself in 1923 writing that even without the existence of Soviets the Bolsheviks would have been able to ascertain when they had won the necessary majority of the working people by reference to "other gauges of our revolutionary influence" including "democratic elections of all kinds". (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*. Vol. 2, pp. 350-1.)

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problems", as Lenin wrote. "It shows how the various classes are *disposed* to solve their problems."[76] For Trotsky, however, the election results were not what they seemed. Faced with the victory at the polls of "the strikebreaking conspiracy of the People's Front"[77], he commented curiously: "The voter has expressed his will—so far as he can in the straitjacket of parliamentarianism —not in favour of the People's Front but against it"! And he proceeded, disdaining any attempt at substantiation, to pronounce that if the Socialists and Communists had broken up the Popular Front alliance with the Radicals "they would have received many more votes." The "real will" of the masses (a metaphysical entity corresponding to Trotsky's preconceived notion of their striving for revolution) had been distorted by an unholy alliance of "the Radical bourgeoisie, the Socialist businessmen and careerists (and) the Soviet diplomats and their 'Communist' lackeys . . . to dupe and rob (them) politically."[78]

In the elections the Communist Party—which Trotsky had been describing in the previous period as "diminishing", "disintegrating", and "de-composing"[79]—had doubled its poll with nearly one and a half million votes. This was, however, only 12.45 per cent of the total. Even assuming against all the evidence that the Socialists with 16.92 per cent had been prepared to join with the Communists in proceeding "from the very first day of the strike" to establish "a regime of dual power"[80], would they have had a reasonable chance, with under 30 per cent of the votes between them, of carrying the majority of the people with them?[81] Was it not simply wishful thinking to believe that millions who had registered their support for bourgeois parties at the ballot box one week would have transferred it to the workers' parties on the barricades the next? And, indeed, if these millions were really capable of such volatility and illogicality, is it not just as probable that they would have veered back again to the right when things became difficult the week after?

Had the workers' parties as a minority attempted "the conquest of power by the proletariat", which Trotsky deemed "possible only on the road of armed insurrection against the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie"[82], the likelihood is that they would have driven a significant part of the one and a half million Radical voters into the arms of the Right, which was looking for a pretext to crush the "Bolshevik menace" (particularly if the Trotskyist historian, Tom Kemp, is right that "during the summer [of 1936], under the influence of the strikes and the concessions made to the workers, the middle class moved to the right."[83]). Colonel de la Rocque of the fascistic *Croix de Feu*—with his 300,000 supporters trained for civil war by 60,000 officers of the reserve—would have had a field day.

Nor should one neglect the international context, which Lenin insisted be taken into account in considering revolutionary tactics. Across the Rhine stood Nazi Germany allied to Fascist Italy in the south-east—both getting ready to help Franco smash Republican Spain, whilst the British bankers used every form of pressure to give them a free hand to do so. A Socialist France, emerging from a *victorious* workers' revolution as a firm ally of the Soviet Union and of Republican Spain against fascist aggression, would have been enormously preferable to a government of right-wing Socialists and bourgeois Radicals susceptible to pressure from their own ruling class and from British imperialism. But a premature uprising supported only by a minority in the setting that I have described stood little chance of victory. The civil war, counter-revolution and possible fascist intervention that it would have produced would therefore have made things infinitely worse on both the national and the international planes.

[76] "The Constituent Assembly Elections" (December 1919). *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Moscow 1963), Vol. 40, pp. 20-21. Emphasis in original. (For another translation see *C.W.*, Vol 30, pp. 271-2.)

[77] *Whither France?*, p. 138.

[78] *ibid.*, p. 144.

[79] *Writings (1933-34)*, pp. 27, 89, 213.

[80] "The New Revolutionary Upsurge" (July 1936), *Writings (1935-36)*, p. 34.

[81] Contrast this with the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Russia in November 1917. To the 24-25 per cent Bolshevik vote should be added the majority of those who voted for the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who topped the poll but split into two parties. The Left S.R.s, commanding the greater popular support, backed the October Revolution and formed a coalition government with the Bolsheviks. Felix Morrow, in the Trotskyist classic *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain* (London, 1963) is therefore wrong in asserting that "by the present Stalinist criterion (of majority support in the country—M.J.), one could condemn the Russian Revolution" (p. 138).

[82] Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 35. It is not clear how Trotsky reconciled this statement with his claim on the previous page of the same article that it would have been possible to "have overthrown the bourgeoisie in June, almost without civil war, with the minimum of disturbance and of sacrifices." (*ibid.*, p. 34). Certainly his French supporters that month, proclaiming that "the decisive stage of the struggle for power has arrived", warned that "civil war, laboriously suppressed for two years, will be *frenziedly* unleashed." (POI Appeal, in Rioux, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6. My emphasis.)

[83] T. Kemp, "Betrayals of 1936-37", *Workers Press*, March 25, 1970.

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Trotsky was right that the working class militancy of May-June 1936 produced "confusion in the camp of finance capital"[84], as was also to be the position initially in May-June 1968. But Lenin's warning would seem to be of great relevance in both cases: "There are always times in a revolution when the opponent loses his head; and if we attack him at such a time we may win an easy victory. But that is nothing, because our enemy, if he has enough endurance, can rally his forces beforehand, and so forth. He can easily provoke us to attack him and then throw us back for many years."[85]

What Went Wrong

"The defeat of the Popular Front," said Trotsky "was the proof of the correctness of our conception."[86] This type of reasoning is not serious. Trotsky himself had written that "even the most correct strategy cannot give victory under unfavourable objective conditions."[87] For Marxists it is a question of analysing what the People's Front achieved and the reasons both objective and subjective for its failure to fulfil the high hopes placed in it—as well as trying to determine whether any alternative strategy would have brought better results.

Looking back on the experience of the Popular Front in 1947, Maurice Thorez said: "The main defect of the People's Front, in which we took the initiative with some success, and which had very positive sides, was that it became a simple *agreement of the leaderships*. We did suggest the creation of People's Front Committees democratically elected in the factories and localities. We suggested the holding of a National Congress, composed of delegates elected by popular assemblies at the base. The congress itself would have elected a National Committee, entrusted with the task of watching over the application of the programme of the People's Front. Some Committees of the People's Front were, in fact, elected; but we did not succeed in breaking the opposition of the Socialists and of our other partners to the holding of a sovereign congress. The Socialists and Radicals gradually deprived the People's Front of its content of struggle for bread, liberty and peace. . . . The People's Front disintegrated little by little and collapsed as the war approached."[88]

Under these circumstances the big bourgeoisie was able to carry through the step by step counter-offensive—political, economic and financial—by which it got firmly back into control, depriving the workers of much of what they had gained in the summer of 1936. Clearly the expropriation of the capitalist class would have prevented such a development. Dimitrov, in his report to the Seventh World Congress, had declared that even a United Front government—not to speak of a broader Popular Front one—was "not in a position to overthrow the class rule of the exploiters," and therefore could not finally remove the danger of counter-revolution. "Consequently," he concluded, "it is necessary *to prepare for the socialist* revolution!"[89] Every Communist realised that such a revolution would be by far the most desirable thing. But, as Marx had written, "it is not enough that thought should seek realisation; reality must itself tend towards the thought."[90]

If the reality was that the Socialists could not be persuaded even to accept the maintenance and extension of the People's Front Committees formed before the elections, how could Trotsky's idea of a united front to struggle for Soviet power have succeeded?[91] If despite tireless campaigning the Communists were unable to force the government headed by the Socialist Blum to assist Republican Spain, or to win the Socialist Party for action with them against the Munich sell-out and the abandonment and betrayal of the modest Popular Front programme, what reality had the talk of "insurrection" in which Trotsky was still indulging in 1938?[92]

The total incapacity of Trotsky's French followers even in the great struggles of 1936 to obtain any support among the workers for his "revolutionary" alternative shows how utterly unrealistic it was. In June 1935 Trotsky had described this puny band (they had about three hundred members at the time)[93] as "a revolutionary factor of the first order" which would "tomorrow or the day after appear to the masses as the only revolutionary possibility."[94] Yet one of the main French Trotskyist organisations, the OCI, discussing their history, has to record that they were "unable to link up with the masses" in

[84] Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[85] Lenin, Report to Fourth Congress of Comintern (November 1922), *C.W.*, Vol. 33, p. 421.

[86] "Fighting Against the Stream" (April 1939), *Writings (1938-39)* p. 64.

[87] "Leninism and Stalinism" (October 1932), *Writings (1932)*, p. 289.

[88] M. Thorez, Report to Central Committee of French Communist Party (October 1947, *World News and Views*, November 22, 1947, p. 535.) Emphasis in original.

[89] *The United Front*, p. 76. Emphasis in original.

[90] K. Marx, Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction (1843-44), *Werke* (Berlin, 1956), Vol. I, p. 386.

[91] See *Whither France?*, pp. 153-6.

[92] See Trotsky to Marceau Pivert, December 22, 1938, *Writings (1938-39)*, p. 122.

[93] Rabaut, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

[94] "A new Turn is Necessary" (June 1935), *Writings (1934-35)*, pp. 315-16.

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June 1936.[95] That October they split into two rival "parties", contesting by-elections against each other—in the name of Trotsky and Socialist Revolution—in which each obtained only a few dozen votes![96]

On the other hand, the French Communist Party, which Trotsky had said in 1935 was "corroding on all sides" and "must fall to pieces[97], increased its membership from 80,000 to 288,000—a leap of 250 per cent—in the following year alone![98] And the Trotskyist history sadly notes that "the young cadres that the general strike revealed mainly reinforced the Communist Party which became the mass party that we know today."[99]

The Popular Front period was also one of trade union unification and growth from one to five million members. The strike movement not only won substantial wage increases and the forty-hour week (later eroded) and holidays with pay (retained), but also important rights of factory representation and collective bargaining.

Moreover, the People's Front did succeed in its first aim which was to stem the growth of the French Fascist movement, which had increased in size and activity menacingly in 1934. Trotsky was absolutely wrong when he wrote that "events can unfold only either toward revolution or toward fascism,"[100] and that "the People's Front creates the favourable conditions for the victory of fascism."[101] As Isaac Deutscher wrote in his invaluable biography of Trotsky: "He viewed the French scene through the same prism through which he has viewed the German scene; yet the prism through which he had seen Hitler's advent so clearly blurred his view of the French prospects . . . Colonel de la Rocque was not to be the French Hitler: nor was the French *petite bourgeoisie* to engender a movement like National Socialism, either because the Popular Front forestalled it, or because its outlook and traditions were different from those of the German Kleinbürgertum."[102] In fact, the French Communists and the Popular Front made a special appeal precisely to the deeply rooted French republican outlook and tradition (for which they were strongly criticised by the Trotskyists) to draw the petty bourgeoisie of their country into the struggle against fascism

Tom Kemp, trying to refute the idea that the Popular Front averted the danger of fascism in France, writes: "In fact there was no fascist danger in 1936, or not until after the ending of the strikes. The fascist leagues had been dissolved."[103] What he fails to recognise is that it was precisely the mass movement culminating in the People's Front victory that forced back the fascists after 1934 and obtained a formal ban on the fascist leagues already from January 1936. And what the Trotsky cult prevents him from telling his *Workers Press* readers is that his statement refutes Trotsky's continued assertions throughout 1936 that the Popular Front was "driving (the masses) into the arms of fascist counter-revolution"[104] and that the administrative dissolution of the fascist leagues was "a lie and a deception".[105] Indeed from 1934 Trotsky had repeatedly attacked the Communists for "demanding of the bourgeois state the *disarming of fascist bands*."[106]

The Pétain regime, which came into being with the defeat of France in 1940, was, as Trotsky wrote in his last article, "no fascism in the real sense of the term."[107] It lacked the basis of a fascist mass movement and collapsed when its German protectors were driven out of France under the combined blows of the allied troops and a mass French resistance movement. In the latter the French Communists showed their ability to organise and lead armed struggle to a successful conclusion and many thousands of their members laid down their lives, including some outstanding members of the Party leadership described by Trotsky as a "clique of Stalinist lackeys, hired adventurers, and bureaucratic cynics."[108] The basis of anti-fascist unity on which the French resistance developed can be said to have been laid by the pre-war People's Front.

Communist Mistakes

All this does not mean that the Communists did not make mistakes in applying their new line in novel and complex circumstances. Thorez had made it clear that "the success of the People's Front will mean the recrudescence of the class struggle. The oligarchy will not surrender without a fight."[109]

[95] *Quelques Enseignements*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 35.

[96] Rabaut, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

[97] Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

[98] In the capitalist countries as a whole the membership of the Communist Parties increased by 120 per cent between 1935 and 1939 (Sobolev, *op. cit.*, p. 425).

[99] *Quelques Enseignements*, p. 20.

[100] *Whither France?*, p. 148.

[101] "The New Revolutionary Upsurge", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[102] I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast* (London, 1963), pp. 275-6.

[103] T. Kemp, "The French Popular Front: the Radical Party", *Workers Press*. March 13, 1973.

[104] *Whither France?*, p. 135 (March 1936).

[105] Trotsky, "The New Revolutionary Upsurge", *loc. cit.* (July 1936).

[106] *War and the Fourth International* (June 1934), *Writings (1933-34)*, p. 321. Emphasis in original.

[107] "Bonapartism, Fascism and War" (Summer 1940), *Writings (1939-40)*, p. 123, Trotsky here described Pétain's regime as "A Senile form of Bonapartism".

[108] *Trotsky's Diary in Exile 1935* (London, 1958), p. 34.

[109] *France Today*, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-5.

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However, insufficient thought was given to the forms that this fight might take in a situation where big business still retained its powerful levers of state and economic power. Over-optimism and failure to prepare the masses for the pitfalls ahead inevitably contributed to a certain demoralisation and disorientation when they emerged. Opportunist errors were made [110] and the degeneration of the Popular Front into a simple agreement at the top (and an increasingly shaky one at that) was insufficiently boldly exposed and combated at the time. As against this, an agressive and uncritical extolling of Stalin and all aspects of the Soviet Union, including the Moscow Trials, made more difficult a closer relationship with and influence on the Socialists in this period, which was so crucial if the People's Front were to succeed.

Such negative features, however, manifested themselves in the course of mass work within the framework of a basically correct and creative strategy which, as we have seen, achieved much despite serious setbacks. They are on a totally different plane from the sterile and divisive policies put forward throughout this period by Trotsky and his followers which achieved absolutely nothing for the working class. Even if on certain individual points the Trotskyists may have made correct criticisms, these were incidental elements in a thoroughly mistaken strategic context. They could be compared, in this respect, to the *individual* cases in which Lenin was to recognise the Mensheviks to have been right against the Bolsheviks before the October Revolution.[111]

Trotsky's Method

Eric Hobsbawm has remarked that it is a very great pity that Trotsky was "so overwhelmed by his hatred of Stalin (admittedly for understandable reasons) that he failed to appreciate the possibilities of the Popular Front strategy."[112] There is indeed little doubt that subjective factors, as well as elements of a factional nature,[113] did play a role here. Otherwise it is impossible to explain the lack of rational balance with which he wrote in the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International*: "People's Fronts on the one hand—fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution."[114]

A few years previously he had admonished the Comintern for not recognising the "sharp clash" between parliamentary democracy and fascism, which for working class organisations was "a question of political life or death", and had declared: "When a state turns fascist . . . it means, primarily and above all, that the workers' organisations are annihilated; that the proletariat is reduced to an amorphous state; and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the independent crystallisation of the proletariat."[115] Now he was ascribing to fascism and the anti-fascist People's Front the same political role. And, although speaking of the need "to draw a distinction between the fighting camps in Spain"[116], he explicitly championed civil war and an "uprising of the proletariat" in the rear of Republican Spain at a time when it was fighting for its life against the forces of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini.[117]

There is, however, I believe, an underlying *political* basis for such an approach expressed in his assumption that spontaneously the "multi-millioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution." When such revolutions failed to come off, Trotsky deduced quite logically from his unwarranted and unproven premise that this could only be because "each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines." These allegedly included the Communist Parties which had definitively gone over "to the side of bourgeois order" and played a "cynically counter-revolutionary role throughout the world."[118] (It is true that the Trotskyist movements have not displayed a corresponding logic by recognising the connection between the *success* of revolutions in a dozen or so countries since the war and the Communist Parties that have led them. To pursue this, however, would take us beyond the theme of this article.)

Trotsky's assumption that "the historical crisis of mankind is *reduced* to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership"[119] is incompatible with Lenin's under-

[110] Dimitrov had warned at the Seventh World Congress that "the danger of right opportunism will increase in proportion as the wide united front develops." (*The United Front*, p. 86.)

[111] Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist" (February 1922), *C.W.*, Vol. 33, p. 208.

[112] E. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionary Perspectives* (London Central Student Branch of Communist Party Pamphlet, 1973). p. 5.

[113] Cde. Leo Figuères, in his book *Le Trotskisme, cet antiléninisme* (Paris, 1969, p. 190), expresses the view that it was for Trotsky "above all a question of taking a line contrary to that of the Communist Parties."

[114] *The Death Agony of Capitalism, op cit.*, p. 14.

[115] *Struggle against Fascism*, pp. 155-6.

[116] *The Death Agony*, p. 55.

[117] *The Spanish Revolution*, p. 261 (April 1937); p. 324 (December 1937).

[118] *The Death Agony*, p. 13.

[119] *ibid.*, p. 12. My emphasis.

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standing of revolution as "a profound, difficult and complex science."[120] Thus in December 1937, Trotsky saw the conditions of victory over fascism in Spain as "quite simple."[121] To take Franco's forces from him, for instance, it was "only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the programme of the socialist revolution", of which "the fascist army could not resist the influence for twenty-four hours"![122]

Such a cavalier attitude was not first displayed by Trotsky in this period. Back in 1924 we find Krupskaya criticising him for ignoring concrete conditions. "When he speaks of Bulgaria or of Germany," she wrote, "he occupies himself but little with the correct estimation of the moment. If we regard events through Comrade Trotsky's spectacles, it appears exceedingly simple to guide events. Marxist analysis was never Comrade Trotsky's strong point."[123]

It is therefore not surprising that Trotsky never adequately faced up to and drew practical conclusions from the profound differences in social structure, institutions, culture, traditions and outlook between Russia before the October Revolution and the bourgeois democracies of the West. Lenin had begun to pose the problem in 1920 when he called on Communists to "seek out, investigate, predict and grasp that which is nationally specific and nationally distinctive",[124] and approved in 1922 the slogan of workers' governments as a possible *form of transition* to the dictatorship of the proletariat in countries like Germany.[125] Although Lenin did not have a chance before his final illness to think out this question further, Gramsci was to develop his conception of "a war of position" as "the only form possible in the West", criticising Trotsky who, he wrote, "in one way or another can be considered the political theorist of frontal attack in a period in which it only leads to defeats."[126]

Looking Forward . . . or Backward

The Popular Front strategy and experience represented an important advance towards this type of approach. Far from signalling their "renunciation of the proletarian revolution in favour of conservative bourgeois democracy", as Trotsky alleged,[127] the People's Front was conceived by the Communists as a class alliance under the growing hegemony of the working class for the defence and extension of democratic rights, which afforded favourable conditions for a move to the left and transition to the next stage of proletarian revolution. In both his criticisms of Bolshevism before 1917 and his later criticisms of the People's Front, Trotsky was failing to see that in both cases the democratic stage could serve as a *bridge* to the socialist stage rather than an obstacle to it.[128]

Writing on the eve of the Seventh World Congress, Togliatti spelt out this perspective. Successes in the united struggle against fascism, he emphasised, "to the extent that they augment the strength and determination of the working class in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, must inevitably result in enlarging the field of struggle which, at a certain point, cannot be solely defensive but must develop as a struggle for power."[129]

As Sam Aaronovitch has pointed out, the changes that have taken place in the last forty years with the growth and strengthening of the working class and the Communist Parties in many of the most advanced capitalist countries mean that "the link between the fight for democracy and the fight for socialism has now become more direct" in the context of a strategic aim of opening the way to

[120] Lenin, Reply to Debate on Peace (March 1918), *C.W.*, Vol. 27, p. 198.

[121] *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, Edited by I. Deutscher (New York, 1964), p. 194.

[122] "The Lesson of Spain" (July 1936), *The Spanish Revolution*, p. 235. This passage is quoted approvingly by Chris Harman in *International Socialism* No. 64, mid-November 1973, p. 25.

[123] N. Krupskaya, "The Lessons of October", in *The Errors of Trotskyism* (London, 1925), p. 366. Lenin's widow saw no contradiction in recognising this, whilst pointing out that in the October Revolution Trotsky had "accomplished wonders in the interests of the safeguarding of the victory of the revolution". (p. 371).

[124] "*Left-wing*" *Communism*, *C.W.*, Vol. 31, p. 92.

[125] See Sobolev, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-4; A. Reisberg, *Lenins Beziehungen zur deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin, 1970), pp. 452-4.

[126] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London, 1973), pp. 237-8. In considering Trotskyist presentations of the Popular Front as simply dictated by Stalin to promote conservative diplomatic ends, it is worth noting that at the beginning of the thirties Gramsci in his fascist jail was counterposing to the Comintern's "Third Period" line a strategy of common action with other Italian anti-fascist parties for intermediate, democratic objectives. See G. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (London, 1970), pp. 255-7.

[127] "Does Soviet Government still follow Principles?" (January 1938), *Writings (1937-38)*, p. 171.

[128] Although such a transition could not be realised in the thirties, it was in fact achieved, though with serious distortions, after the last war in the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe where—contrary to all Trotskyist predictions and expectations—capitalism was eliminated.

[129] E. Ercoli (Togliatti) in *Stato Operaio*, 1935, in F. Ferri, Editor, *Autologia di Stato Operaio* (Rome, 1964), Vol. XI, p. 365.

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socialist revolution.[130] There can therefore be no question of going back to the Popular Fronts of the thirties. We need to apply Marxism more boldly and creatively in analysing the highly complex problems of the road to socialism in relation to the specific conditions, traditions and stages of development of our countries.

In other words, we should be going forward from the basis laid by the Seventh World Congress rather than following the Trotskyists in a "return to the first four congresses of the Communist International" in the mistaken belief that the strategy that brought victory to the Bolsheviks in Russia in October 1917 will do the same for us in Western Europe today. Lenin argued most strongly against those who look back to the revolutions of the past and cling to yesterday's theories when they should be "*studying* the specific features of the new and living reality."[131] Today, as in his day and at the time of the Popular Front, "the main task of contemporary communism in Western Europe and America is to acquire the ability to find, to outline and to carry out a concrete, not quite revolutionary plan of measures and methods for *leading* the masses to the real, determined, last and great revolutionary struggle."[132]

[130] S. Aaronovitch, "Perspectives for Class Struggle and Alliances", *Marxism Today*, Vol. 17, No. 3, March 1973, p. 71. He illustrates his point by indicating the much more advanced nature of the 1972 Common Government Programme of the Left in France compared with the 1936 Programme of the French Popular Front, in which the Communist and Socialist Parties were not yet strong enough to occupy the controlling position that they hold in the Union of the Left today.

[131] Lenin, Letters on Tactics (April 1917), *C.W.*, Vol. 24, pp. 44-45. Emphasis in original.

[132] Lenin, "*Left-wing*" *Communism* in *Lenin on Britain* (London, 1934), p. 260. Emphasis in original. This is a translation from Lenin's manuscript as given in the second Russian edition of Lenin's *Works* (Moscow/Leningrad, 1928), Vol. 25, p. 233. It differs from the version given in the English *C.W.*, Vol. 31, p. 97, which is translated from a published edition in which the textual variations from Lenin's manuscript are not indicated.

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Conclusion

The situation in primary care in Britain is one of great confusion and uncertainty, but also of huge glimpsed opportunities. The potential of this group of health workers as a component of the broad left alliance is greater than as a support for reaction. The logic of science is ultimately humane, and most doctors stand to gain rather than lose by a socialist transformation of our society; a heavy responsibility lies on those of us who work in primary care, to make the most of the present situation in which our own field is the most dynamic area in medicine.

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